GLIMPSES OF THE VEDĀS

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—Satyavrata Siddhāntālankār

Introduction

Glimpses of the Vedās has been written with a view to giving a first-hand knowledge, to the English-knowing public, of what the *Vedās*, which in the words of Max Müller are the oldest books in the library of mankind, contain, and to stimulate thought among scholars to evaluate the intellectual calibre of those whose thoughts they are said to represent.

India has been the repository of the *Vedās*. Having read, studied, and translated the *Vedās*, Prof. Max Müller wrote in his book *India : What Can it Teach Us*:

> If I were to look over the whole world to find out the country most richly endowed with all the wealth, power and beauty that nature bestows – in some parts a very paradise on earth – I would point to India. If I were asked under what sky the human mind has most fully developed some of the choicest gifts, has most deeply pondered on the greatest problems of life and has found solutions of some of them which well deserve the attention even of those who have studied Plato and Kant – I should point to India. And if I were to ask myself from what literature we, in Europe, we who have been nurtured almost exclusively on the thoughts of Greeks and Romans, and of one Semitic race, the Jews, may draw that corrective which is most wanted in order to make our inner life more perfect. more comprehensive, more universal, in fact more human, a life, not for this life only, but a transfigured and eternal life – again I should point to India.

Sir William Jones, a judge of the Calcutta High Court and who was the founder of Asiatic Society in Calcutta, wrote:

> It is impossible to read the Vedant or many fine compositions in illustration of it, without believing that Pythogoras and Plato derived their sublime theories from the same fountain with the sages of India.

Shopenheur, a great German scholar, having read the translation of the *Upanishads* which are the expositions of the *Vedās*, exclaimed:

In the whole world, there is no study so beneficial, so elevating, as that of the *Upanishads*. It has been the solace of my life, it will be the solace of my death.

Romain Rolland, a French philosopher, who studied the philosophical thoughts contained in the *Vedās* and in the *Upanishads*, said:

If there is one place on the face of the earth where all dreams of living men have found a home from the very earliest days when men began to dream of existence, it is India.

A French scholar, named Jacolliot, wrote in his book *Bible in India* (Vol. II, Chapter I):

Astonishing fact! The Hindu revelation (*Veda*) is of all revelations the only one whose ideas are in perfect harmony with Modern Science, as it proclaims the slow and gradual formation of the world.

Bishop West Cott told the late Mr. C.F. Andrews – a great humanitarian Christian missionary who had made India his home – the following:

India and Greece were the two great nations who had made history of the world. As Greece had been the leader of Europe, India would always be the leader of Asia.

Mr. Maeterlink, the Nobel Prize winner, relating to the *Nāsadīya Sūkta* of the *Rig Veda*, writes in his book *The Great Secret*:

Is it possible to find in our human annals, words more majestic, more full of solemn anguish, more august in tone, more terrible? Where could we find at the very fountain of life a completer and more irreducible confession of ignorance? Where, from the depths of our agnosticism, which thousands of years have augmented, can we point to a wider horizon? At the very outset it passes all what has been said, and goes further than we shall ever dare to go, lest we fall into despair, for it does not fear to ask itself whether Supreme Being knows what He has done – knows whether He is or is not the Creator, and questions whether He has become conscious of Himself.

Dr. Alfred Wallace, the co-discoverer of the theory of evolution with Darwin, writes in his book *Social Environment and Moral Progress*:

> The wonderful collection of hymns known as the *Vedās* is a vast system of religious teachings as pure and lofty as those of the finest portions of the Hebrew scriptures. Its authors were fully our equals in their conception of the universe and the Deity expressed in the finest poetic language. (p.11)
>
> In it we find many of the essential teachings of the most advanced thinkers. (p.13)
>
> We must admit that the mind which conceived and expressed in appropriate language such ideas as are everywhere present in those *Vedic* hymns, could not have been inferior to those of our very best religious teachers and poets, to our Milton, Shakespeare and Tennyson. (p.14)

Dr. Alfred Wallace, believing as he did in physical evolution, was in a fix as to how there could be a conciliation between the concept of physical evolution and that of social evolution in the face of the highest thoughts contained in the *Vedā*s which are considered as the products of the highest antiquity.

What is the age of the *Vedā*s. According to Hindu conception the *Vedā*s are eternal and were revealed in the beginning of creation. But let us not go by what the Hindus believe. Let us see what the western scholars have to say in this regard. Prof. Max Müller says in his *Physical Religion* (p.18):

> Whether the Vedic hymns were composed in 1000 or 1500 or 2000 or 3000 years B.C. no power on earth could ever fix.

Jacobi, another Vedic scholar of world-wide fame, has fixed 4500 B.C. for the *Rig Veda* on astronomical calculations.

Anyhow, the fact remains that the *Vedā*s are admittedly the oldest books in the library of mankind and go far back in time of history, when according to the theory of evolution mankind had not set its pace on progress and civilisation. The question the western scholars have to solve is as to how these books do contain thoughts which outdo the modernmost thinking.

We have not picked up stray *Mantrās* (verses) from the *Vedās*. We have translated *Sūkta* after *Sūkta* (chapter after chapter) and shown a consistent thought running throughout as a thread in a rosary. We have, at the end, also given selected *Mantrās* containing the highest thoughts humanity has ever dreamt of.

It is for the reader to assess objectively the psychological, spiritual and the cultural content of the *Vedās* from the material placed before him in these *GLIMPSES*.

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I

Purush Sūkta

पुरुष-सूक्त

God as Universal Soul

The *Purush Sūkta* is a very important *Sūkta* of the *Vedās*. It is the only *Sūkta* that is found in all the four *Vedās* with some variations. In the *Rig Veda* it is to be found in *Mandal* 10 and *Sūkta* 90; in the *Yajur Veda* it is found in *Adhyāya* 31, and instead of 16 as in the *Rig Veda*, there are 22 *Mantrās* in it, with some variation in their order, the first 16 being practically the same and the last 6 not making a part of the *Purush Sūkta*; in the *Atharva Veda*, the *Mantrās* are more or less the same, being 16 in number, with some variation in their order and in some words; in the *Sāma Veda*, the first 5 *Mantrās* are the same with a slight variation.

We shall confine ourselves to the 16 *Mantrās* of the *Purush Sūkta* of the *Rig Veda* as they will serve the purpose of the other *Vedās* too. So here is the first *Mantra:*

सहस्रशीर्षा पुरुषः सहस्राक्षः सहस्रपात् ।
सः भूमिं सर्वतः स्पृत्वा अति अतिष्ठत् दशांगुलम् ।।१।।

(God if He were to be conceived as a) *Purush* – Gigantic Man – is perceptible everywhere, as if He had thousands of heads, thousands of eyes, thousands of feet. He, touching the earth on all sides (with the palm of His hand), stands with all the fingers (of His hand) outstretched (empty, not touching the earth).**1**.

The *Mantra* visualises God in the form of living creatures. The millions of heads, the millions of eyes, the millions

of feet are, as it were, His heads, His eyes, and His feet. The universe is He Himself incarnate. He is so much in, through, above, and beyond the earth – in, through, above, beyond the living and the non-living – that the creation forms an insignificant work of the master artificer. To illustrate how much He is above and beyond the earth, the *Mantra* says that if He were to hold the earth in the palm of His hand, the hand will touch the earth in all directions and yet will remain free with all the ten fingers outstretched. The implication is that though the earth will be held in the palm of His hand, the hand enveloping it all around, the palm will remain empty as He will stand out with all His ten fingers extended as if nothing was held in the hand. Vasudeva Sharan Aggarwal interprets *Dashāmgulam* (दशांगुलम्) in a different way. He says that the ten fingers mean the ten digits – fingers of the feet. The *Purush* enveloping the earth stands beyond the earth on the ten fingers of His feet. It may also mean, as some commentators have tried to explain, that pervading the universe all around He still stands away from it by ten fingers, ten signifying an indefinite distance and fingers signifying a measure. All interpretations, however, point to His immeasurability.

The *Sūkta* may also mean that God or the Supreme Entity in the form of a Social organisation has thousands of heads, thousands of eyes, thousands of feet signifying that the innumerable human beings of the world with their heads, eyes, and feet represent a social entity with its own life. Just as a man has his head, eyes, and feet, the society also is a collective entity with all the individual heads, eyes, legs, etc. as a part and parcel of the social entity behaving independently as the behaviour of an individual.

The word *Purush* with a thousand heads does not mean a gigantic creature. This is made clear in the next *Mantra*:

पुरुषः एव इदं सर्वं, यत् भूतम्, यत् च भव्यम् ।
उत अमृतत्वस्य ईशानः, यत् अन्नेन अतिरोहति ।।२।।

The *Purush* alone is this all; That what was and that what will be. And He is the Lord of immortality; and also of

that which grows with food (that is, which is mortal).2.

All this world is the manifestation of the *Purush*, the past and the future, whatever the world has been and whatever it will be is His manifestation. Here, only the past (भूतम्) and the future (भव्यम्) are mentioned, and not the present. The present is half-past and half-future; hence instead of saying the past, the present, and the future, the *Mantra* mentions only the past and the future. Whatever had existed in the past, does exist in the present, and will exist in the future. It is all but a manifestation of the Supreme Being – the *Purush*. And whatever there is – mortal and immortal, He is the Lord of it all. To denote 'immortality', the word *Amrit* is used; to denote 'mortality', the word *Anna* is used. *Anna* means that which can be eaten (अद्यते इति अन्नम्) – that which can be eaten or destroyed is mortal. The sum and substance of this *Mantra* is that the Divine Being is the Lord of Time, of Immortality, and of Mortality.

Explaining the greatness of the Supreme Being, the third *Mantra* says:

एतावान् अस्य महिमा, अतः ज्यायान् च पूरुषः ।
पादः अस्य विश्वा भूतानि, त्रिपाद् अस्य अमृतम् दिवि ॥३॥

This much is the greatness of the *Purush*, and He is far greater than this. All the worlds together make only one-fourth of His being; three-fourths of His immortality is in the heaven.3.

We are familiar with the world we inhabit. Even this much is so vast that it is beyond measure. The *Mantra* says that whatever world we are acquainted with, is only an insignificant manifestation of the Supreme Being. It is one-fourth of His reality, three-fourths is beyond our knowledge. Look at the heavens. Every star is a world by itself, and there are innumerable stars in the immeasurable space. All that is His greatness, His glory, His manifestation.

This idea is continued in the next *Mantra* with a slight variation in words:

त्रिपाद् ऊर्ध्वः उत् ऐत् पुरुषः, पादः अस्य इह अभवत् पुनः ।
ततः विश्वङ् वि अक्रामत्, साशना अनशने अभि ।।४।।

With His three-fourths, the *Purush* arose (i.e., is manifested in heaven in the form of the Sun, the Moon, the Stars, etc.), while His remaining 'one-quarter' is re-manifested in the form of creation (on the earth). It is from this one-quarter that the creation has spread in all directions in the form of the living (those who eat) and the non-living (those who do not eat).**4**.

These two *Mantrās* convey the same idea in different ways. God is conceived as a quadruple *Purush* (चतुष्पाद् पुरुषः), Who with one part manifests Himself on the earth, and with the remaining three parts in the heaven. One should not take it literally, for God does not exist in parts. The idea conveyed is that of the greatness, the grandeur, and the glory of the Supreme Being Who is far above and beyond the universe – beyond the living (the non-material) and the non-living (the material). From Him have spread all those who eat (साशना – the living) and all those who do not eat (अनशने – the non-living).

Having established the greatness of the Supreme Being conceived as the *Purush* – a giant man – the next *Mantra* describes the genesis of the earth and the rest of the creation:

तस्मात् विराट् अजायत, विराजः अधि पूरुषः ।
सः जातः अति अरिच्यत, पश्चात् भूमिं अथो पुरः ।।५।।

From the (one-fourth of) *Purush* was born the *Virāt* (the Nebula, the original primordial matter or the global structure of the universe). The *Purush* – the Supreme Being or the Creator of the universe – was the Lord of the *Virāt*, and the *Purush* (the creator) was above (*Adhi* – above, according to *Sāyan*) the *Virāt*. When the *Virāt* came into being, it expanded, separated and later on the earth was born. Now, know that He – the *Purush* – the Creator was before it. Or, below was the earth, and the rest above.**5**.

In this *Mantra* we have translated *Virāt* as the Nebula or the primordial matter or the original global structure of the universe. By this we mean *Prakriti* (matter) in evolution. There is evidence in the *Rig Veda* why the *Virāt* should be understood as the Nebula. From a study of the *Mantrā*s it becomes evident that the *Virāt* (विराट्) and the *Hiraṇyagarbha* (हिरण्यगर्भ) are synonyms. In the *Rig Veda* (10.90.5) we read: तस्मात् विराट् अजायत; in the *Yajur Veda* (13.4) we read: हिरण्यगर्भ: समवर्तत अग्रे; in the *Atharva Veda* we read: विराट् अग्रे समभवत् (19.9) – all these are in the *Purush Sūkta*. As except the words *Virāt* and *Hiraṇyagarbha* the remainder of the words are the same, hence *Virāt* must be treated as the synonym of *Hiraṇyagarbha*. As *Hiraṇyagarbha* is translated as Nebula by the exponents of the *Vedā*s, *Virāt* must also mean Nebula or primordial matter or *Prakriti*.

The Lord of *Prakriti* is the *Purush* – the Supreme Being. *Adhi* means above. The Supreme Being is over and above the primordial matter, which after coming into existence expanded and consequently separated. In this separation, in the splitting up of the Nebula, the planets such as Earth, Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, Neptune, Pluto, etc. were born. However, the Creator was prior to them all, and the planets afterwards. Or, the Earth was below and the rest of the planets were above and beyond the Earth.

MacDonell translates this *Mantra* in a different way. He says that the word *Purush* has been used in two senses. First – the prime-evil *Purush* which may mean the Supreme Being; second – the evolved *Purush* which may mean the substance that undergoes evolution and development. If we understand the *Purush* in these two senses, the translation of the fifth *Mantra* would be as follows:

From Him, that is, from the *Purush*, the *Virāt* was born, from the *Virāt*, the *Purush* was born. When born, He reached beyond: the Earth behind and also before.**5**.

Here *Purush* means the Supreme Being. *Virāt* means great. In this context the *Virāt* is the great structure of matter intermediate between the two *Purushā*s – the prime-evil *Purush* on the one side and the evolved *Purush* in the

form of *Virāt* on the other. The evolved *Purush* while expanding creates the Earth and all that which is created before the creation of the Earth.

This creation – genesis – of the world through the evolved *Purush* or through the *Virāt* – primordial matter of *Prakriti*, is a sort of *Yajñya* – a sacrifice, in which at every stage there is sacrifice for further creation, for there cannot be creation without sacrifice. Dilating on the principle of sacrifice operating in the world for the purpose of creation, the next *Mantra* says:

यत् पुरुषेण हविषा देवाः यज्ञम् अतन्वत ।
वसन्तः अस्य आसीत् आज्यम्, ग्रीष्मः इध्मः शरत् हविः ॥६॥

When men of divine qualities performed sacrifice by offering the evolved *Purush* (*Virāt* or *Prakriti*), the Spring was its melted butter (Ghee), Summer its *Samidhā* (fuel), and Autumn its oblation.**6**.

According to this *Mantra*, the genesis of the world was due to sacrifice, offering of one's being, surrender – *Yajñya*. When the world came into existence, the basic process working in the creation was sacrifice, surrender, *Yajñya*. The evolved *Purush* or the primordial matter – *Virāt* or *Hiraṇyagarbha* – sacrificed itself, gave up its individual existence, and became personified as *Yajñya*. In the *Yajñya* there are three things – melted butter, fuel, and oblation. What were these three in the creation of the world? Spring was the Ghee, Summer was the fuel, Autumn was the oblation. The *Mantra* says that the *Virāt* – the primordial matter or the Nebula – when further evolved became Spring, Summer, and Autumn – signifying a sacrifice – *Yajñya*. Metaphorically speaking, the *Mantra* says that the creation of the world is a continued *Yajñya* in which the *Virāt* – the primordial matter – is sacrificed and is transformed into the three Seasons. The sacrifice does not stop at the creation of the seasons, it continues:

तम् यज्ञम् बर्हिष प्र औक्षन् पुरुषं जातं अग्रतः ।
तेन देवाः अयजन्त साध्याः ऋषयः च ये ॥७॥

The evolved *Purush* or the primordial material substance which sprang up before (and took the form of Spring, Summer, and Autumn) by the process of sacrifice – *Yajñya*, became dried as matured grass (as the grass had ripened and dried), so it was besprinkled (with water and it became alive and green). Taking the clue from this, the divine people, the sceptics, and the saints (all these sort of people) took to the principle of sacrifice, surrender, self-efacement – *Yajñya*.7.

The *Mantra* is describing the process of genesis, the process how the world started to evolve in its onward march of creation. This process is styled as *Yajñya* or sacrifice. At every stage there is sacrifice when something new is generated. The old is lost and the new is born – this is *Yajñya*. When the evolved *Purush* or the *Virāt* sacrificed itself resulting in Spring, Summer, and Autumn, at Autumn a stage came when everything dried up as it does in a seasonal cycle. This is the stage of *Barhi* – dried grass. The word dried grass is only symbolic. It represents the stage of driedness or lifelessness. To put life into the dried grass one besprinkles it with water. This besprinkling with water is also symbolic of the *Yajñya* which enlivens the lifeless. The *Mantra* says that there is a cycle in creation – Spring, Summer, Autumn, and again Spring, Summer, and Autumn. Dryness, Life; Dryness, Life; Dead and Alive, again Dead and Alive. This is the *Yajñya* going on in nature, so much so that even in a trifling thing as grass (*Barhi*) the same principle holds good. This type of sacrifice, which is seen in the evolving *Purush*, is practised by the *Devās*, the semi-*Devās*, and the *Rishīs* referred to in this *Mantra*.

Not only in grass and vegetables, in animal life too the process of sacrifice (*Yajñya*) is going on. To illustrate this, the next *Mantra* says:

तस्मात् यज्ञात् सर्वहुतः संभृतम् पृषत् आज्यम् ।
पशून् तान् चक्रे वायव्यान्, आरण्यान्, ग्राम्याः च ये ।।८।।

From *Yajñya* in which everything was offered as sacrifice, and out of this total sacrifice were born curd and butter;

the *Yajñya* created those animals – those that fly in air, live in forests, and are domesticated and live in villages.**8**.

In this *Mantra* the real significance of *Yajñya* is brought out. *Yajñya* means sacrifice, offering oneself to the Supreme Being, self-surrender. When the evolving *Purush* – the Nebula, the *Virāt*, the primordial material substance, *Hiraṇyagarbha* – was sacrificed, the sacrifice did not go waste. Out of the sacrifice was born the whole creation – vegetables, trees, birds, animals – domesticated as well as undomesticated. The significance of *Yajñya* is, the more you offer and the more you sacrifice, the more you get or the more you are compensated. As the evolving *Purush*, *Virāt* or *Hiraṇyagarbha*, made a total sacrifice – *Sarva Hutah* (सर्वहुतः), from that was born the vegetable and animal life for which the *Mantrā*s symbolically mention Grass (*Barhi*), Curd (*Prishad*), and Butter (*Ājya*).

Continuing in the same strain, the next *Mantra* says:

तस्मात् यज्ञात् सर्वहुतः ऋचः सामानि जज्ञिरे ।
छन्दांसि जज्ञिरे तस्मात्, यजुः तस्मात् अजायत ।।६।।

(Not only vegetables, curd, butter, and animal life) were born out of the *Yajñya*, even the *Rig Veda*, the *Sāma Veda*, the metres of the *Yajur Veda* were born out of the evolving *Purush*.**9**.

When the evolving *Purush* was sacrificed, not only physical things such as vegetables and trees, animals of forests, of villages, and of cities appeared, even things of the mind and the intellect became manifest. What was the intellectual manifestation? The *Mantra* says that in this long genesis of creation the *Vedā*s (knowledge) – *Rig*, *Yajur*, *Sāma*, and *Atharva*, which were the storehouse of thought, also appeared.

Detailing the genesis of the domestic animals, the next *Mantra* says:

तस्मात् अश्वाः अजायन्त, ये के च उभयादतः ।
गावः ह जज्ञिरे तस्मात्, तस्मात् जाताः अजावयः ।।१०।।

From (the sacrifice – *Yajñya* of the evolving *Purush*) were born the fast-moving animals (such as horses) and all such animals as have two sets of teeth – the upper and the lower sets. Yes, from that (the sacrificial *Purush*) were born cows, from that were born goats and sheep.**10**.

The genesis of the world has been conceived as the *Yajñya* – sacrifice or the offering of the person of the evolving *Purush* or of the *Virāt* as an oblation in the creation of the world. The *Purush* that is sacrificed is not the Creator or the Supreme Being. The Creator has been termed here as the *Purush*, and the creation as the *Virāt*. The *Hiraṇyagarbha* has also been termed as the *Purush*. The difference is that the first *Purush* is the sacrificer, the second is the one sacrificed. The first *Purush* is the eternal, unalterable Being, the second is the primordial material substance or a modification of *Prakriti*. It is from the second *Purush* or the *Virāt* that the evolving process working within it brought out the variagated material and social world.

Now the question is: When the evolution proceeded and the *Purush* disintegrated into different parts of the material and the social world, which part of it signified the corresponding part of the social organisation? This question is asked in the following *Mantra*:

यत् पुरुषं वि अदधुः । कतिधा वि अकल्पयन् ।
मुखम् किम् अस्य । कौ बाहू । कौ उरू, पादौ उच्येते ॥११॥

When the *Purush* was divided (into many parts), in how many parts or in how many ways they conceived of Him? What did they conceive of His mouth, What of His two arms, His two thighs, and His two feet?**11**.

We have seen in the previous *Mantrās* what the *Yajñya* or the sacrifice of the *Purush* generated in the physical or biological world. We have further seen what it had generated in the intellectual or the psychological world. Now we want to know what it had generated in the sociological world. The answer is:

ब्राह्मणः अस्य मुखम् आसीत् । बाहू राजन्यः कृतः ।
उरू तत् अस्य यत् वैश्यः । पद्भ्याम् शूद्रः अजायत ॥१२॥

The *Brāhmaṇ* (ब्राह्मण:) was His mouth. His arms were the *Rājanyah* (राजन्य:). His thighs became the *Vaishyās* (वैश्य:). From His feet were born the *Shūdrās* (शूद्रा:).**12**.

Describing the process of social development, the *Mantra* explains the division of society, comparing it to the different organs of the human being. In the human being the function of the head is to think. In the social set-up we have people with intellectual bent of mind. They are called *Brāhmaṇs*, or philosophers in Plato's phraseology. They represent the head of the social being. In the human being the function of arms is to protect. In the social set-up we have people whose main accomplishment is their physical strength. They are called *Rājanyās*, or soldiers in Plato's language. They represent the arms of the social being. In the human being the function of the stomach and the thighs is to store and to distribute. They are called *Vaishyās*, or traders in Plato's terms. They represent the stomach or the thighs of the social being. In the human being the function of the feet is to move, labour, and work. They are called *Shūdrās*, or labourers according to Plato. They are not capable of serving the society in a way other than by doing labour-work. They represent the feet of the social being.

As the function of the head is to think, the *Mantra* says, the *Brāhmaṇs* in society represent the head of the sacrificed *Purush*; as the function of the arms is to protect, the *Rājanyās* in society represent the arms of the sacrificed *Purush*; as the function of the thighs including the stomach is to store and distribute, the *Vaishyās* in society represent the lower portion of the sacrificed *Purush*; and as the function of the feet is to carry the burden of the weight of the body and to carry the man from place to place doing hard labour, the *Shūdrās* in society represent the feet of the sacrificed *Purush*. *Rājanya* means the *Kshatriyās* or the men of arms.

After describing the genesis of the physical, the biological, the psychological, and the sociological factors of the universe from the sacrifice – the *Yajñya* – of the evolving *Purush*, the next *Mantra* makes a mention of the cosmological evolution from the same source:

चन्द्रमा मनसः जातः, चक्षोः सूर्यः अजायत ।
मुखात् इन्द्रः च अग्निः च, प्राणात् वायुः अजायत ।।१३।।

The moon was born from the mind of the *Purush*; from His eyes the sun was born; from the mouth were born the *Indra* and the *Agni*; from His breath the *Vayu* was born.**13**.

In the cosmos there is the moon, the sun, the fire, the wind. All these and the other constituent factors of the universe were, and are, manifestations of the evolving *Purush*, that is, of the *Virāt* or the *Hiraṇyagarbha*. The moon has influence on the mind. The sun influences the eyes. We cannot see unless there is light. Hence, the *Mantra* refers to the relationship between the moon and the mind, between the light of the sun and the eyes. Similarly, the *Indra* or brilliance and the *Agni* or fire are associated with the mouth, and the *Vāyū* – the wind – is associated with the breath. The fire eats up everything put into it, as the mouth does; hence the fire is associated with the mouth.

This does not mean that the moon was born out of the mind, and the sun out of the eyes, of the *Purush*. It is only an imagery signifying that if the world were conceived as a *Purush*, then these would be His organs. Continuing in the same vein, the next *Mantra* says:

नाभ्याः आसीत् अन्तरिक्षम्, शीर्ष्णः द्यौः सम् अवर्तत ।
पद्भ्यां भूमिः, दिशः श्रोत्रात् तथा लोकान् कअल्पयन् ।।१४।।

From His navel came the firmament, from His head the heaven into existence, from His feet the earth, the directions from his ears, and thus the worlds were constituted.**14**.

The idea of the cosmological evolution from the sacrifice – the *Yajñya* – of the evolving *Purush* is continued in this *Mantra*. Here the word *Akalpayana* used to denote evolution is significant. *Akalpayana* is derived from *Kalp*, meaning to constitute or to constitute in imagination (कल्पना). The whole concept of the genesis of the constituents of the world from the *Yajñya* is symbolic, is imagery; the

world is conceived in the form of a *Purush* whose organs represent the different structures of the cosmos. It is a *Kalpana*, a conception, not a fact, and so it is, in the words of the *Veda*, *Akalpayat*. The head represents the heaven, the feet represent the earth, the navel represents the firmament or the atmosphere between the heaven and the earth – the basic idea is that man is a microcosmic entity corresponding to the *Virāt Purush* who is a macrocosmic entity.

Having propounded the idea that the basic principle in the physical, biological, psychological, sociological, and cosmological world is that of the *Yajñya* – sacrifice – self-surrender, self-abnegation, the next *Mantra* applies the principle to the individual's life:

सप्त अस्य आसन् परिधयः, त्रि सप्त समिधः कृताः ।
देवाः यत् यज्ञं तन्वानाः अबध्नन् पुरुषं पशुम् ।।१५।।

Seven were the enclosures of the *Yajñya* – sacrifice; thrice-seven were the faggots made (for ignition). The *Yajñya* that the *Devās* performed, in that they bound down the animality residing in the *Purush*.**15**.

The world is the outcome of a great *Yajñya* – sacrifice. The *Purush* – the Supreme Being – is performing this *Yajñya*. Similarly, the microscopic *Purush*, also residing in this body, has to perform a similar *Yajñya*. What sort of *Yajñya* has he to perform? *Yajñya* means sacrifice. What sacrifice has man to perform? He has to bind down the *Pashu* – the animal – in him. This will be a *Yajñya*, a sacrifice of the animality in him.

The *Purush* has seven enclosures in which he is bound down: Head, Eyes, Ears, Tongue, Lungs, Heart, and Feet. All his activities are conditioned by them. These are called seven organs (*Saptāng* – सप्तांगाः) in the *Mandūkya Upanishad*. The *Purush* is cabined, cribbed, and confined in these enclosures. Enclosed or imprisoned in them, he has to perform a *Yajñya* of abnegation to get rid of the bondage so that he may be free from the *Vāsanās* (cravings) consequent on these bondages. In the *Yajñya* one needs fuel for ignition. What is the fuel? The fuel are the 21 faggots that have

to take the fire in the *Yajñya*. They are: 5 Material Elements, 5 Senses of knowledge, 5 Organs of action, 5 Breaths (*Prān*, *Apān*, *Vyān*, *Udān*, and *Samān*), and 1 Mind. The 21 faggots keep the man aflame, but they have to be controlled by means of knowledge. When all the seven enclosures and their flame that causes the 21 senses that enslave the man are reduced to ashes, one attains liberation through the performance of the *Yajñya* which is happening all the time in the universe as described in the *Purush Sūkta*.

The *Yajñya* in the universe inspires mankind to perform a similar *Yajñya* within everybody's mind. The outward *Yajñya* should actuate us to perform the inward *Yajñya*. Hence the next *Mantra* says:

यज्ञेन यज्ञं अयजन्त देवाः तानि धर्माणि प्रथमानि आसन् ।
ते ह नाकं महिमानः सचन्त, यत्र पूर्वे साध्याः सन्ति देवाः ॥१६॥

With the *Yajñya* the learned men performed the *Yajñya* – sacrifice; these were the first duties. By doing so, they obtained greatness and obtained the sorrowless state (*Na-Ak*) in which their predecessors were.**16**.

A mysterious statement is made in this *Mantra*: The learned performed the *Yajñya* with the *Yajñya*. What does it mean? It means that there are *two* sorts of *Yajñya*, external and internal. Uptil now the *Sūkta* has been dealing with the external *Yajñya* – the one we find in the physical, biological, psychological, sociological, and cosmological world. Now the *Sūkta* mentions about the internal *Yajñya*, the one in the life within the individual.

This, the *Sūkta* says, is the first and the foremost duty of each one of us. The external is for the internal. The Elders who had gone before – our predecessors – attained greatness and crossed sorrow as they carried the life of sacrifice within. The outward is only a symbol of what should take place inside of us.

EPILOGUE

The *Purush Sūkta* is one of the most important *Sūktā*s of the *Rig Veda*. It speaks of God as incarnate in the world

or the world as God incarnate – the *Virāt Purush*; it makes a mention of the four divisions of society – the head of the *Purush* as *Brāhmaṇs*, His arms as *Kshatriyās*, His lower parts as *Vaishyās*, and His feet as *Shūdrās*; and it treats every evolving, evolved, and developed thing of the world as sacrifice – *Yajñya* – performed by the *Virāt Purush*. The central theme of the *Sūkta* is: the Supreme Being is contemplated as the *Purush* in the process of evolution which has been called as sacrifice of oneself – the *Yajñya*. Besides the *Virāt Purush*, four divisions of society and the *Yajñya*, we have explained in our exposition that the *Virāt* and the *Hiraṇyagarbha* are one and the same, and that the *Hiraṇyagarbha* is the primordial material substance which is another name for the nebula. Let us now deal with these four points:

(1) *Virāt and Purush:* These two words used in the *Sūkta* seem to be confusing. But the confusion disappears when we treat the *Virāt* both as an adjective and as a noun. When we use the word *Virāt* as an adjective of *Purush*, it means a great Spiritual Being – *Virāt Purush* – with millions of heads, eyes, and feet – सहस्रशीर्षा पुरुष: सहस्राक्ष: सहस्रपात् – God incarnate in the form of the universe outside qualified with the word *Virāt*, great. When we use the word *Virāt* as a noun, it means Nebula, *Prakriti*, *Hiraṇyagarbha*, or matter in evolution. In the *Sānkhya* philosophy the word *Mahat* (महत) has been used for the evolving *Prakriti* – प्रकृते : महान्. *Virāt* and *Mahat* are the same. The *Rig Veda* says: तस्मात् विराट् अजायत, the *Sānkhya* says: प्रकृते: महान्. *Virāt* (विराट्) and *Mahat* (महत्) convey the same meaning if we go by the context of the *Rig Veda* and the *Sānkhya*. Similarly, the word *Purush* also seems to be confusing. But the confusion disappears if we understand by *Purush* the creator who starts evolution as well as the creation which is created. Thus, there is no confusion when the Rig Vedic *Mantra* says: From the *Purush* was born the *Virāt* and from the *Virāt* was born the *Purush*. The first *Purush* is the creator, the second *Purush* is the evolving material substance, the creation, the Nebula – तस्मात् विरात् अजायन, विराज: अधि पूरुष:.

(2) *The Four Divisions of Society:* Besides mentioning *Virāt* and *Purush*, the *Sūkta* speaks of the four divisions

of society representing the different limbs of the *Virāt Purush*. The idea is that if we were to treat society as an organic entity it would correspond to the four main limbs of the Spiritual Being. This would mean God incarnate in society. The intellectuals would represent the head, the fighting forces would represent the arms, the trading class would represent the lower part, and the labour class would represent the feet. Conversely, if God were to incarnate in society, His head would be the intellectuals or the *Brāhmaṇs*, His arms would be the *Kshatriyās*, His lower part would be the traders or the *Vaishyās*, and His feet would be the labourers or the manual workers – the *Shūdrās*.

This description visualises not only the natural and the scientific order of the society which holds good for all times and climes and countries, but also as signs of the status of the components of society in the social structure. The intellectuals are always the heads whatever be the shape of society, the fighting forces are and will always remain the second in status, the business community the third, and the labour the fourth. Whenever and wherever this equilibrium is disturbed, the society disintegrates.

(3) *Yajñya or Sacrifice:* The third idea that runs across practically all the *Mantrās* of the *Sūkta* is that of the *Yajñya* or sacrifice. The world is visualised as a great sacrifice – *Yajñya* – in which God makes a sacrifice of Himself out of Whom the material and the non-material, the inorganic and the organic world is born. *Yajyña* means that one must lose one's independent existence, sacrifice oneself for the whole, and thus the whole takes shape. This principle runs through the tiniest to the mightiest things in life which make progress and development. Nothing evolves towards higher heights unless there is the seed of sacrifice in it. The word used in *Mantrās* 8 and 9 is *Sarva Hutah* (सर्व हुत:) – total sacrifice – which furthers generation and regeneration. This idea of *Yajñya* was so much enchanting and captivating that it gripped the imagination of the Vedic community, and to this day the idea of *Yajñya* is central to our spiritual heritage. Unfortunately, people have forgotten its significance. They think that igniting fire, putting ghee oblations in it, and reciting *Mantrās* is all that matters. They forget

that it is an external symbol of the internal *Yajñya* – a life of self-abnegation, surrender, and sacrifice. This is what is meant by the 16th *Mantra* which says: With the *Yajñya* the learned performed the *Yajñya* – यज्ञेन यज्ञं अयजन्त देवा: – realising the external as the symbol of the internal, the *Devās* performed the *Yajñya*.

(4) *Virāt and Hiraṇyagarbha:* In the 4th *Mantra* of the *Sūkta* we read: तस्मात् विराट् अजायत – From the *Purush* was born the *Virāt*. In the *Yajur Veda* (13-4) the *Mantra* says: हिरण्यगर्भ: समवर्त्तत अग्रे – that is, in the beginning of creation there was the *Haraṇyagarbha*. As the meaning of both the *Mantrās* is the same, and the words *Virāt* and *Hiraṇyagarbha* are interchangeable, both the words have the same meaning. Etymologically also, *Virāt* means that which is lustrous – विशेषण, राजते इति विराट्. As *Hiraṇyagarbha* is defined by the *Nirukta* (10, 23, 1) as that whose interior is lustrous, and *Virāt* also means the same, *Virāt*, *Hiraṇyagarbha*, and Nebula convey the same meaning. Nebula – the primordial material substance – is lustrous, *Virāt* is lustrous, and *Hiraṇyagarbha* is lustrous. So here the Vedic version and the scientific theory coincide.

II

Nāsadiya Sūkta

नासदीय सूक्त

The Doubting Mind

The *Nāsadīya Sūkta* is the 129th *Sūkta* of the 10th *Mandal* of the *Rig Veda*. The first word of the first *Mantra* of the *Sūkta* begins with the word *Nāsat* – नासत् – which means *not-non-existent*.

The *Sūkta* has attracted the attention of western scholars so much that they have wondered how the *Rishīs* of the Vedic period could soar so high in imagination and could be credited with such intellectual flights. Materlink, quoting the Rig Vedic verses of the *Sūkta*, writes in *The Great Secret*:

Is it possible to find in our human annals, words more majestic, more full of solemn anguish, more august in tone, more terrible? Where could we find at the very fountain of life a completer and more irreducible confession of ignorance? Where, from the depths of our agnosticism, which thousands of years have augmented, can we point to a wider horizon? At the very outset it passes all that has been said, and goes further than we shall ever dare to go, lest we fall into despair, for it does not fear to ask itself whether Supreme Being knows what He has done – knows whether He is or is not the creator, and questions whether He has become conscious of Himself.

Max Müller in *The Vedas* (pp. 80-81), while writing on this very *Sūkta*, says:

I have remarked several times before that the *Rig Veda* contains some very striking philosophical passages and how far

the Vedic poet must have been carried by purely metaphysical speculations may be seen by a hymn which I translated in 1859 in my book *History of Sanskrit Literature*. This hymn is important not only by what it says, but what it presupposes. Whatever date we may ascribe to it, many generations of thinkers must have passed before such questions possibly could have been asked and answered.

Let us see what are the contents of the *Nāsadīya Sūkta* that have made Materlink and Max Müller pen the above words.

न असत् आसीत्, नो सत् आसीत् तदानीम्, न आसीत् रजः, नो व्योमा परोः यत् । किम् आवरीवः, कुह कस्य शर्मन्, अम्भः किम् आसीत् गहनं गभीरम् ॥१॥

The non-existent was not then, nor was the existent; the Earth was not, nor the firmament, nor that which is beyond. (When there was nothing then) what could cover what, and where, and in whose care? Did the waters and the bottomless deep (then exist)?**1**.

This is the height of speculative thinking. We think of the world either as existing or as non-existing; we do not go beyond these two alternatives. Here the speculator goes beyond and speculates – in the beginning, was the world non-existent? If so, how could the existent come out of the non-existent? Alternatively, did it exist in the beginning in the present form? If so, how did it change, for change is the essence of existence? All that exists lapses into non-existence. Is it not a fact that in the beginning the Earth did not exist, nor did the firmament and that which is beyond? When nothing existed, how could there be a super-existence which could account for all existence? If super-existence existed, then what was it doing, where did it exist, what for did it exist? Not only the solid Earth, even about the waters and the deep sea the same is the query of one who indulges in speculation. Some commentators who are not prepared to accept this sort of speculation have tried to interpret *Asat* not as non-existent but something

as approaching non-existent. But this is only a semantic in words and hair-splitting. The *Mantra* speaks of the speculative imagination of a poet who is wonderstruck at what he sees of the world before him. He asks to himself: I see the world changing, it is not what it was yesterday, it will not be so tomorrow what it is today, does it exist or does it not, if it does not exist then how it came into existence – all these are speculative thoughts. After all these speculations, the *Sūkta* proceeds:

न मृत्युः आसीत्, अमृतं न तर्हि, न रात्र्याः अन्हः आसीत् प्रकेतः ।
आनीत् अवातं स्वधया तत् एकम्, तस्मात् ह अन्यत् न परः किंचन
आस ।।२।।

There was not death nor immortality then; there was no sign of night, nor of day. That One breathed without extraneous breath with His own nature. Other than Him there was nothing beyond.**2**.

As in the beginning of creation the world as we see it did not exist, so life also did not exist. If life did not exist, naturally death also could not exist. If both life and death did not exist, then immortality too could not exist. Without life, without death, without immortality, how could day and night exist? It is only the events and the happenings in life that give awareness of time – past, present, and future, or of day and night. This is the tenor of the *Mantra*.

If there was no existence, nor non-existence, no life nor death, no day nor night, no time, then what was there? How did the world come into being? Who was the author of it all? The *Mantra* says: It was He. He breathed without breath. He was life itself. Without breath He breathed by His own nature – *Swadhayā* (स्वधया). He was alone, there was none else besides Him.

तमः आसीत् तमसा गूढं अग्रे, अप्रकेतम् सलिलं सर्वं आः इदम् ।
तुच्छयेन आभु अपिहितम् यत् आसीत्, तपसः तत् महिना अजायत
एकम् ।।३।।

In the beginning there was darkness, intensified darkness, indistinguishable darkness, all this (visible world) was reduced to its primordial nature. This primordial world which was enveloped by the all-pervading power of One before whom the world of matter is a trifle became one (that is, came into existence) through the force of His intense activity – *Tapas*.**3.**

In this *Mantra* some important statements are made. The first statement is that in the beginning when the world was not in its present manifest form, there was utter darkness. This means that all effects which later on had to manifest themselves were in the beginning unmanifested, indistinguishable. This is quite a reasonable proposition. The second statement is that though nothing was manifest, every thing was present in a seed form in the primordial nature of the original cause of the world – that is, *Prakriti* (प्रकृति). The word used in the *Mantra* for the primordial nature of the cause – *Prakriti* – is *Salilam* (सलिलम) – from 'सति लीयते लीनं वा इति सलिलम' – that which is reduced and lies latent in the original cause. MacDonell and others translate the word *Salilam* (सलिलम्) as water, but we think *Prakriti* is more appropriate and is to the point as the description in the *Sūkta* is of the creation of the world. The third statement is that the world which was latent in the primordial cause in the beginning of creation became patent through the grace and intense activity – *Tapas* – of the fundamental Life-Force.

What happened when the unmanifested stirred to move on to become manifest? This is answered in the next *Mantra:*

कामः तत् अग्रे सम् अवर्तत अधि, मनसः रेतः प्रथमं यत् आसीत् ।
सतः बंधुं असति निः अविन्दन्, हृदि प्रतीष्य कवयः मनीषा ।।४।।

In the beginning Desire arose. This was the first seed of the mind (of the One who here is supposed to be the Creator). Those who can see beyond by putting their mind in the heart (that is, by putting their mind and heart together), found the binding link of the existent in the non-existent (that is, the non-existent existed in the existent).**4.**

This *Sūkta* begins with the query of what existed in the beginning of creation. Was existence a reality, or non-existence a reality in the beginning? In the third *Mantra* it says that the indistinguishable world of darkness was enveloped by an all-pervading power of One before whom the world of matter is a trifle. In this Power, Desire arose which served the purpose of a bond between the non-existent and the existent. The world as it is apparent to our senses did not exist in the beginning, it was non-existent. But something made it existent as appears to our senses today. This link between the non-existent and the existent is the Desire of the Creator. Desire is the seed – *Retas* – रेतस् – out of which this whole universe has arisen.

Describing the aspects of Desire, the next *Mantra* says:

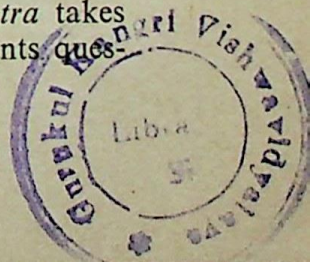
तिरश्चीनः विततः रश्मिः एषाम्, अधःस्वित् आसीत् उपरिस्वित् आसीत् । रेतोधाः आसन्, महिमानः आसन्, स्वधा अवस्तात्, प्रयतिः परस्तात् ।।५।।

The rays of Desire spread across (the whole world), it was (spread) below and was (spread above), (the result was that the small organisms) bearing seeds (were born), and big organisms (bearing seeds) were born. (as the Earth was dependent on the Desire of the Creator, hence the position of) matter was lower, of the spirit which acted (with Desire) was far above.5.

The *Mantra* speaks of Desire which was the instrument of the Creator, the offshoots of Desire which have been spoken of as its rays spread in all directions of the world. The world was full of life and reverberated with Desire which went on producing small and big organic and inorganic things. Organic such as living beings; inorganic such as Sun, Moon, Stars, Mountains, Rivers, etc.

Swadha which means *Prakriti* (स्वस्मिन धीयते धार्यते वा – self-contained) is lower with reference to creation and *Prayati* (प्रयत्न or effort generated by the Desire of the Supreme Conscious Energy) is higher in relation to *Prakriti* or matter.

Having made this positive statement, the *Mantra* takes us back once again into speculation when it mounts ques-

tions upon questions and says:

कः अद्धा वेद कः इह प्रवोचत्, कुतः आजाता, कुतः इयं विसृष्टिः ।
अर्वाक् देवाः अस्य विसर्जनेन, अथ कः वेद यतः आबभूव ।।६।।

Who truly knows, and who can declare whence it cometh and whither it vanisheth. The Divine people (who can offer a solution were born) much after the creation came into being. (Under the circumstances) who, then, knows whence it has come about.**6**.

In this *Mantra* we find the word *Visrishtih*, which some have translated as 'Creation'. We have translated it as 'Dissolution of Creation' – the vanishing of the creation. In fact, *Srishti* means creation, *Visrishti* must mean the opposite of creation, that is, dissolution of the creation. Looking to the text, our interpretation appears to be more appropriate though both translations can be correct.

The *Mantra* says: Who knows, and who can declare. Declaration is always after knowing. Both are inter-connected and hence there is great logic in this statement. Similarly, whence it came and whither it vanished – both these are inter-connected and are in keeping with the tenor of the speculative inquiry which runs throughout these *Mantrās*. Hence, the *Visrishti* meaning disappearance which is inter-linked with appearance is more to the point.

Then, the *Mantra* says that even the *Devās* cannot say whence creation comes and whither it goes, because the *Devās* – men of learning – were born after the creation. How could they know of events prior to their birth? The net result is that nobody knows whence creation cometh, whither it goeth – it is all enveloped in darkness and the unknown.

Or, *Kah* (कः) in the *Mantra* may mean the Blissful Supreme Existence. In that case, it means that God alone knows whence the world cometh and whither it goeth.

इयं विसृष्टिः यतः आबभूव, यदि वा दधे, यदि वा न ।
यः अस्य अध्यक्षः परमे व्योमन्, सः अंग वेद, यदि वा न वेद ।।७।।

Whence this creation has come; Who holds or does not hold; He who is its surveyor in the highest heaven; He alone knoweth, and yet doth He know?7.

EPILOGUE

This *Sūkta* is a masterpiece of speculative imagination. Did the world exist in any form in the beginning of creation? Did it not exist and there was no existence? If anything existed, then what was it? Who set the creation into going? Did the one who created the world himself also exist or he also existed not? If he existed, did he know that he existed?

Could speculation go any further than that what is depicted in these *Mantrās*? But, does it mean that the Vedic *Rishi* who chants these *Mantrās* indulges in such speculation in awe and wonder? Yes, he does, and rightly so, because everything in the world is so mysterious and wonderful that the miracle-maker himself stands stunned at his miracles. In poetic language, this enhances the wondrous nature of the creator of the universe which, in a way, is the only answer to the queries with which the *Sūkta* begins. The answer is that the riddle of the universe is unknown and unknowable.

We end this epilogue with a quotation from Max Müller's *Six Systems of Indian Philosophy*:

> Nor must we forget that these always have been privileged individuals whose mind was untrammelled by the thoughts of the great mass of the people, and who saw and proclaimed, as if inspired by a power not themselves, truths far beyond the reach of their fellow men. (First Volume, p. 49.)

III

Hiraṇyagarbha Sūkta

हिरण्यगर्भ सूक्त

Creation and God

We have dealt with the *Nāsadīya Sūkta* and the *Purush Sūkta* – the most important ones as regards creation is concerned. The *Hiraṇyagarbha Sūkta* is another important one in this line. We shall deal with this *Sūkta* in this chapter.

The 10th *Mandal* of the *Rig Veda* contains the *Hiraṇyagarbha Sūkta*. Its serial number is 121. It contains 10 *Mantrā*s of prayer to the Divine Power. The first *Mantra* is to be found in the *Yajur Veda* also where it is the 4th *Mantra* of the 13th Chapter. The *Sūkta* of the *Rig Veda* begins as follows:

हिरण्यगर्भः समवर्तत अग्रे भूतस्य जातः पतिः एकः आसीत् ।
सः दाधार पृथिवीं द्यां उत माम् कस्मै देवाय हविषा विधेम् ॥१॥

In the beginning of creation there existed the *Hiraṇyagarbha*. When born, he was the sole master of all that was created. He upheld the earth and the heaven. Whom else shall we offer prayers if not to Him.**1**.

The word *Hiraṇyagarbha* means one whose interior is golden, that is, which is lustrous from within like the lustre of gold. This is particularly a Vedic expression to denote the effulgence and the brightness of the nebula which was the first product of creation. In the *Purush Sūkta* also there is a mention of the *Virāt* which means a substance shining and bright. The twin words bright and *Virāt* sound alike. Who knows, bright may be a derivation of *Virāt*. Manu,

while describing the evolution of the material world says: "तदण्डं अभवत् ह्यैमं सहस्रांशु सम प्रभम्" – that is, in the beginning of creation came into being an egg-shaped substance glittering like gold, as bright as one thousand suns. All these descriptions point to a nebular structure described as *Virāt* in the *Purush Sūkta* and *Mahat* in the *Sānkhya* philosophy – *Prakriteh Mahan* (प्रकृते: महान्). This nebular structure (by the Supreme Being) was the master of creation, that is, heaven and earth. The devotee says: Whom else shall we offer prayers if not to this *Hiraṇyagarbha* – whose very core is lustrous and who is so magnificent and bright.

Hiraṇyagarbha can also refer to the Supreme Divine Being Himself as He is lustrous by His very nature. That Supreme Being upholds the heaven and the earth. Whom should one offer prayers if not to Him?

We have tried to explain *Hiraṇyagarbha* both as the nebula and as the Divine Supreme Being. Similarly, the word *Kasmai* (कस्मै) may have two meanings. One meaning has been explained by us in our translation: Whom should we offer prayers if not to Him. Some translators have rendered *Kasmai* as an ablative of the word '*K*' – meaning God, the Blissful. But in simple Sanskrit the word *Kasmai* means 'For whom'. Hence, after extolling the amazing powers of the Supreme Being in upholding the heaven and the earth, it is but appropriate and natural for one to proclaim whom should one offer prayers if not to him who is so mighty and great. In the same vein the prayer continues:

य: आत्मदा बलदा, यस्य विश्वे उपासते प्रशिषं यस्य देवा: ।
यस्य च्छाया अमृतं, यस्य मृत्यु:, कस्मै देवाय हविषा विधेम ।।२।।

One who is the giver of spiritual and physical strength; Whose commands are worshipfully obeyed by all, even by the high-ups – the *Devā*s; Whose graceful protection (shadow) is immortal and to be devoid of whose protection (shadow) is death. Whom else shall we offer prayers if not to Him.2.

The word used in the *Mantra* is *Chhāyā* (छाया) which

means shade or shadow. Here it means the hand of blessing. To be under His blessing is immortality, to be without it is death.

यः प्राणतः निमिषतः महित्वा एक इत् राजा जगतः बभूव ।
यः ईशे अस्य द्विपदः चतुष्पदः, कस्मै देवाय हविषा विधेम ॥३॥

Who, by His greatness, is verily the master of this world that breathes and winks; Who is the Lord of the two-footed and the four-footed creatures; Whom else shall we offer prayers if not to Him.**3**.

यस्य इमे हिमवन्तः महित्वा यस्य समुद्रं रसया सह आहुः ।
यस्य इमाः प्रदिशः यस्य बाहु, कस्मै देवाय हविषा विधेम ॥४॥

Whose grandeur these snow-clad (mountains) proclaim; Whose grandeur proclaims the ocean along with the rivers; Whose grandeur proclaim all the directions which are as if His arms; Whom else shall we offer prayers if not to Him.**4**.

येन द्यौः उग्राः पृथिवी च दृढा, येन स्वः स्वभितं, येन नाकः ।
यः अन्तरिक्षे रजसः विमानः, कस्मै देवाय हविषा विधेम ॥५॥

By whom the sky was made profound and the earth steady; By whom the heaven and the solar sphere were held high; The One who holds (the planets and the stars) as particles of dust in the firmament; Whom else shall we offer prayers if not to Him.5.

The *Mantra* says that it is due to him that the earth is *Dridh* (दृढ़ा), steady and fixed. The implication is that otherwise the earth cannot be fixed due to its constant rotation. Rotating and yet fixed, moving and yet unmoving – this is due to Him Who is the Supreme Being.

A very poetic but significant and realistic expression has been made in this *Mantra* when it says that the Supreme Being holds the planets and the stars as particles of dust in the firmament. Are they not as particles of dust in this

vast, vast universe? Could the imagination of a poet and the realism of a scientist go any further?

यं क्रन्दसी अवसा तस्तभाने अभ्यैक्षेतां मनसा रेजमाने ।
यत्र अधि सूरः उदितो विभाति, कस्मै देवाय हविषा विधेम ।।६।।

Whom, heaven and earth, shining brightly, safe and secure under His protection (as if) look by their mind; In whom the risen sun shines on the horizon; Whom else shall we offer prayers if not to Him.**6**.

आपः ह यत् बृहतीः विश्वम् आयन्, गर्भं दधाना जनयन्तीः अग्निम् ।
ततः देवानां समवर्तत असुः एकः, कस्मै देवाय हविषा विधेत ।।७।।

'*Āpah*' (आपः) means the primordial matter. The root is आप्लृ व्याप्तौ – meaning that which is spread all over. The primordial matter or the nebula which is spread all over the universe in the beginning of creation contains in itself the germs of generating *Agni* – fire, (which at other places has been termed as *Hiraṇyagarbha*). From that (*Hiraṇyagarbha*) was born the unique life of the *Devās*. Whom else shall we offer prayers if not to Him.**7**.

The central idea of this *Mantra* is the same as of the first *Mantra*. In the first *Mantra* only one word is used – *Hiraṇya-garbha* (हिरण्यगर्भः) – primordial substance lustrous inside. In this *Mantra* instead of one word, many words are used – *Garbham dadhānā Janyantīh Agnim* (गर्भं दधाना जनयन्तीः अग्निं) containing and generating the lustrous fire – but the meaning in both the cases is the same. Hence, as in the first *Mantra*, the reference is to the beginning of creation; similarly, here also the reference is to the beginning of creation when the nebula was brought into existence by the Divine Force.

We have stated that *Āpah* (आपः) in the text of the *Mantra* means the primordial matter or the nebula or *Prakriti* in evolution. The *Mantra* says that *Āpah* (आपः) generates the *Agni* (अग्निः). Here *Agni* represents the lustrous substance or the nebula. But, *Āpah* may also mean waters. In

that case, the meaning of the *Mantra* would be: Water, bearing it within, generates Fire. In the *Prithivi Sūkta* (see Ch. VII) also it is said: अग्निं आप: बिभ्रती – that is, the water holds fire within. All hydro-electric activity points to the truth contained in the *Mantra* that water is impregnated with fire. This prayer is addressed to the Supreme Being eulogising His wondrous operations which can harmonise such contradictory elements as water and fire existing together.

य: चित् आप: महिना पर्यपश्यत् दक्षं दधाना जनयन्ती: यज्ञम् ।
य: देवेषु अधि देव: एक: आसीत् कस्मै देवाय हविषा विधेम ॥८॥

One who by His might beheld the primordial material substance which contained in itself dexterity or skill to create sacrifice – *Yajñya*. That Being who is Supreme amongst the *Devās*; Whom else shall we offer prayers if not to Him.**8**.

The import of this *Mantra* is that the Lord while initiating the task of creation of the world sees to it that the primordial substance (*Prakriti*) is so dexterously planned that ultimately it generates the spirit of sacrifice (*Yajñya*) which means offering. Offering oneself at the altar of the Lord is not destruction, it is *Yajñya*, sacrifice – for the sake of regeneration. The world in which every self-effacement leads to a new creation is a living testimony to the constant *Yajñya* going on in every particle of the cosmos. Effacement is the foundation of creation – this is the essence of the *Yajñya*.

मा न: हिंसीत् जनिता य: पृथिव्या:, य: च दिवं सत्यधर्मा जजान ।
य: च अप: चन्द्रा: बृहती: जजान, कस्मै देवाय हविषा विधेम ॥९॥

May He not destroy us who is the progenitor of the earth; or who possessed of the eternal verities procreated the heaven; and who generated the vast and the delightful waters. Whom else shall we pray if not Him.**9**.

प्रजापते न त्वत् एता अन्यत् य: विश्वा जातानि परि ता बभूव ।
यत् कामा: ते जुहुम: तत् न: अस्तु स्याम पतय: रयीणाम् ॥१०॥

O *Prajāpati*, Lord of Creation, there is no other than thou who existeth in all the created things enveloping them all over. May the object of our desires for which we offer ourselves as sacrifice to thee be fulfilled. May we be the masters of material and spiritual wealth.**10**.

EPILOGUE

The nebular hypothesis postulates that the solar system was developed from the nebulae. The nebula is the luminous substance of the cluster of the solar stars. The *Sūkta* under discussion speaks of the creation having been preceded in the beginning by the *Hiraṇyagarbha* – a substance which is lustrous and bright like gold (हिरण्यगर्भः समवर्तताग्रे). In the *Purush Sūkta* also there is a mention of the universe having been originated from the *Virāt* (ततः विराट् अजायत). The etymological meaning of *Hiraṇyagarbha* and *Virāt* is practically the same. Both mean lustrous, brilliant, bright. The *Rig Veda* says that the beginning of the world started with the *Hiraṇyagarbha* or the *Virāt*. Modern astronomical investigations also speak of the luminous substance which was the first creation. This is called nebula, the *Vedas* call it *Hiraṇyagarbha* or *Virāt*, and the *Sānkhya* philosophy calls it *Mahat* (प्रकृतेः महान्).

Sir James Jeans writes about the nebula in *The Mysterious Universe*: "A nebula whose light takes ten million years to reach us has a speed of about 900 miles a second." The distance and the speed of the nebula itself is enough to inspire one to proclaim in ecstacy, as the *Mantra* has done: "Whom shall one offer prayers if not to Him who is behind all this wonderful creation."

IV

Indra Sūkta

इन्द्र सूक्त

The Mighty Indra

The second *Mandal*, 12th *Sūkta* of the *Rig Veda*, is styled as the *Indra Sūkta*. What is the meaning of *Indra*? The word is derived from the root इदि परमैश्वर्ये – one who is of the highest might. The mightiest one is *Indra*. Among all the names of deities mentioned in the *Vedās*, this is the most frequently occurring name. A.A. MacDonell suggests that though the etymology of the word is doubtful, its radical portion *ind* may be connected with *ind-u*, *u* being dropped, thus indirectly connecting *Indra* with *Indu*, and *Indu* with *India*. However, there is no denying the fact that *Indra* is not only one of the most, but the most important of the names we come across in the *Vedās*.

The word *Indra* also occurs in the *Zend-Avesta* of the Persians, where it is mentioned not as a deity, but as a demon. As the Indian and the Persian Aryans lived together in pre-historic times, it appears that due to some misunderstanding a conflict arose between the two branches, and *Indra* and some other deities of the Indian branch came into disrepute with the other branch who used those names as abuses. However, it shows that the Indian branch of the Aryans was more dominant, as it is only the dominant who is abused.

As *Indra* is the most important deity of the *Vedās*, we are giving here the translation of the *Indra Sūkta* which will throw light on what is meant in the *Vedās* by the mention of the word *Indra*. Though there is a mention of this word in many *Mantrās*, the *Indra Sūkta* is an outstanding one which is known by his name.

**यः जातः एव प्रथमः मनस्वान् देवः देवान् क्रतुना परि अभूषत् ।
यस्य शुष्मात् रोदसी अभ्यसेताम् नृम्णस्य महना, सः जनासः इन्द्रः ।।१।।**

That one who is possessed of intelligence – मनस्वान्; Who ranks first – प्रथमः; As soon as he becomes manifest – जातः एव; He excels the other deities by having adorned the world – परि अभूषत्; with his powerful acts – क्रतुना. Before his strength tremble – अभ्यसेताम्, the heaven and the earth – रोदसी. He, O men, is *Indra*.**1**.

Here *Indra* is defined as that Divine Existence wherein lie Wisdom, Intelligence, Power. It governs the heaven and the earth. Clearly, the description refers to God as the Divine Power, and not to any mundane deity. He has adorned the world with His mighty work of giving shape to the earth, the sun, the moon, and the stars. He is Indra.

**यः पृथिवीं व्यथमानाम् अदृंहत्, यः पर्वतान् प्रकुपितान् अरम्णात् ।
यः अन्तरिक्षं विममे वरीयः, यः द्यां अस्तभ्नात्, सः जनासः इन्द्रः ।।२।।**

Who made steady the distressingly quaking earth; Who pacified the angry mountains; Who measured out the extended space; Who holds up the firmament; He, O men, is *Indra*.**2**.

What is meant by the distressingly quaking earth? It is a poetic expression. When the earth came into existence, it was a split-part of the nebula. That condition is described here as distressingly quaking. What is meant by the angry mountains? It refers to volcanoes that emit fire and smoke. It is described here as angry mountains. Who pacified them if it was not *Indra*. There is space immeasurable in the universe, there is the firmament where the sun and the stars revolve. There must be someone who has measured the immeasurable; a force, a power which guides and regulates the movements of the planets in the sky. That one, the *Mantra* says, is *Indra*.

यः हत्वा अहिम् अरिणात् सप्तसिन्धून्, यः गाः उत् आजत् अपधा बलस्य । यः अश्मनः अन्तः अग्नि जजान, संवृक् समत्सु, सः जनासः इन्द्रः ।।३।।

The one who destroying the clouds lets the waters flow – अरिणात् सिन्धून्, in fast-running streams; The one who is the holder – अपधा, of strength – बलस्य, who lets the rays of the sun – गाः, come from above – उत् आजन्; The One who generated – जजान, fire in the stone; The one who destroys the enemies – संवृक्, in battles; That one, O men, is *Indra*.3.

The *Mantra* describes the wonderful workings of nature and ascribes them to *Indra*, which means the powerful entity behind all such phenomena. It is due to that power the clouds pour forth rains resulting in the rapidly-running – सप्त; rivers – सिन्धून्; It is due to that power that the strong rays – गाः, of the sun come from above; It is due to that power that fire can be generated out of stones. That one, the *Mantra* says, is *Indra*.

A.A. MacDonell translates this *Mantra* as follows:

> Who having slain the serpent, released the seven streams, who drove out the cows by the unclosing of *Vala*, who between two rocks has produced fire, victor of battles, he, O men, is *Indra*.

MacDonell and others also have translated *Ahih* – अहिः – in this *Mantra* as 'serpent'. But, what can the serpent have to do with bringing down the waters? *Ahih* – अहिः – means 'cloud' also. And the cloud does have a relationship with the rain. *Sapta Sindhu* (सप्त सिन्धुः) has been translated by MacDonell as 'the Punjab' because there were seven rivers. But *Sapta* (सप्त) does also mean 'running fast' derived from the root *Srip* – सर्पसर्पणे. In this context 'running fast' is more appropriate than 'seven'. *Gāh* (गाः) has been translated as cows, and *Balasya* (बलस्य) has been translated as '*of a person named Val*' by MacDonell. *Gah* (गाः) means 'rays' also. *Balasya* (बलस्य) means 'of strength'. Our translation to the effect that the phenomenon of strong rays of the sun coming from above is controlled by *Indra* is more appropriate and to the point than the translation of MacDonell saying: '*who drove out the cows by the unclosing of Vala*'. The translation of MacDonell presumes that the *Mantra* contains utter nonsense, whereas

the whole tone of the *Sūkta* shows that it is uttered in the praise of the *Lord Indra*.

येन इमा विश्वा च्यवना कृतानि, यः दासं वर्णं अधरम् गुहा अकः । श्वघ्नी इव यः जिगीवान् लक्षम् आदत् अर्यः पुष्टानि, सः जनासः इन्द्रः ।।४।।

By whom have all unstable things of the world been created? Who sends – अकः (from अकरोत्), to the low-lying den – अधरम् गुहा, the destructive – दासं (from दासु उपक्षये), class of men – वर्णम् ; Like the hunter – श्वनी, who successfully wins – जिगीवान् – his aim; Who forfeits – आदत, the substantial possessions – पुष्टानि, of his enemies – अर्यः (from अरेः), he, O men, is *Indra*.**4**.

MacDonell's translation is:

By whom all things have been made stable; who has made subject the *Dās* colour and has made it disappear; who like a winning gambler the stake, has taken the possession of the foe; He, O men, is *Indra*.

MacDonell interprets the words *Dāsam Varṇam* (दासं वर्णम्) as the non-Aryan colour, the aborigines. This interpretation is acceptable only if we accept the theory that the fourfold classification of caste system – वर्ण व्यवस्था – is based on colour, and not on profession. In fact, *Varna* – (वर्ण) – comes from the root *Vri* – वृ वरणे – 'to choose'. *Varṇa* means the choice of a profession. The word *Dās* (दास) comes from the root *Dasu* (दसु उपक्षये) which means 'to destroy'. So, the text means: One, that is *Indra*, who sends to the low-lying den men who follow a destructive or unsocial profession.

यं स्मा पृच्छन्ति कुह सः इति घोरम्, उत ईम् आहुः न एषः अस्ति इति एनम् । सः अर्यः पुष्टीः विजः इव आ मिनाति, श्रत् अस्मै धत्त, सः जनासः इन्द्रः ।।५।।

It is a terrible thing – *Ghoram* (घोरम्) that they ask:

'Where is He'; (It is also a terrible thing that) they say of Him – He is not. He diminishes – आ मिनोति, the substantial possessions – पुष्टीः, of such an enemy – *Aryah* – अर्यः – (from अरेः), as if by shaking him up – *Vijah* – विजः इव. Have faith in Him – श्रत् अस्मै धत्त, O men, he is *Indra*.5.

यः रध्रस्य चोदिता यः कृशस्य, यः ब्रह्मणः नाधमानस्य कीरेः ।
युक्तग्राव्णः यः अविता सुशिप्रः सुतसोमस्य, सः जनासः इन्द्रः ॥६॥

Who is the furtherer of the rich; of the poor; and of the suppliant *Brāhmaṇ* of devotional songs; The saviour – अविता – of those who impart knowledge – सुत सोमस्य; of those from whom *Soma*, i.e., knowledge, flows (*Suta* – सुत – परिस्रुत); And apply that knowledge to life – युक्त ग्राव्णः; That one, O men, is *Indra*.6.

Here *Indra* is defined that One who is the furtherer of the rich, the protector of the poor, the shelter of the devotees, the saviour of the intellectuals as well as of men of action. Economically mankind is classified into two classes – the rich and the poor; Intellectually and spiritually men are divided into three categories – men of Emotion, of Intellect, and of Action; men of Feeling, of Knowing, and of Willing; भक्त, ज्ञानी and कर्मी. *Indra* is one who protects and gives shelter to all of them.

यस्य अश्वासः प्रदिशि, यस्य गावः, यस्य ग्रामाः, यस्य विश्वे रथासः । यः सूर्यं, यः उषसं जजान, यः अपां नेता, सः जनासः इन्द्रः ॥७॥

Whose are the horses in all directions; Whose the kine; Whose the villages; Whose all the chariots; Who created the Sun; The dawn; Who is the guide of the waters; He, O men, is *Indra*.7.

The horse – अश्वः, represents all fast-moving objects and creatures. Wherever there is speed – the horses, the rivers, the thunderbolt, all these are under the control of *Indra*. The kine – गावः, represent all objects and creatures who yield something as the cow yields milk. Our senses are also called cows – गावः, as they yield the milk of knowledge. They are under the control of *Indra*.

The village – ग्रामः, represents a group of people. They are under the control of *Indra*. Chariot – रथासः, represents a luxurious way of living. This is also under the control of *Indra*. The sun, the dawn, the waters – all are controlled by some power. That power, the *Mantra* says, is *Indra*.

यं क्रन्दसी संमती विह्वयेते, परे अवरे उभया अमित्राः ।
समानं चित् रथं आतस्थिवांसः, नाना हवेते सः जनासः इन्द्रः ॥८॥

Whom the two – उभया, bewailing – क्रन्दसी, and unfriendly – अमित्राः, armies cry for help – विह्वयेते; One army on the other side – परे, and the other on this side – अपरे; And if the two have mounted on the similar chariots and invoke the Lord separately – नाना हवेते, that, O men, is *Indra*.**8**.

Here the scene depicted is that of a battle between two armies in similar condition. Both are in distress. In desperation they bewail and cry for help. The one whom they address their prayers for succour is *Indra*.

यस्मात् न ऋते विजयन्ते जनासः, यं युध्यमानाः अवसे हवन्ते ।
यः विश्वस्य प्रतिमानं बभूव, यः अच्युतच्युत्, सः जनासः इन्द्रः ॥९॥

Without – ऋते – whom men cannot conquer – न विजयन्ते; Whom, while fighting – युध्यमानाः, they call for help – अवसे हवन्ते; Who has been an Ideal – प्रतिमानं, for everyone – विश्वस्य; Who overthrows – च्युत्, the unconquerable – अच्युत् – He, O men, is *Indra*.9.

यः शश्वतः महि एनः दधानान्, अमन्यमानान् शर्वा जघान ।
यः शर्धते न अनुददाति शृध्यां, यः दस्योः हन्ता, सः जनासः इन्द्रः ॥१०॥

Who slays – जघान, with his arrow or with his destructive power – शर्वा (from शृणाति शञ्न्), those who do not confess – अमन्यमानान्; Their continuing (शश्वतः) in great sin – महि एनः; Who do not give strength (shelter) – शृध्यां, to one who is

seeking (shelter) – शर्धते (from शरु: वज्र: तेन युक्त:); Who slays the slayer; He, O men, is *Indra*.**10**.

The idea in the *Mantra* is that if one commits a sin, one must confess it, but if one goes on committing sin, then a time comes when *Indra* punishes him. *Amanyamānam* – (अमन्यमानम्) means those who do not confess their sin. The second idea is that if one confesses and seeks shelter, then he who refuses shelter will be at fault. Not to confess after committing sin is wrong, and not to forgive a person who has confessed is wrong too.

यः शम्बरं पर्वतेषु क्षियन्तं चत्वारिंश्याम् शरदि अनु अविन्दम् ।
ओजायमानं यः अहिम् जघान दानुं शयानं, सः जनासः इन्द्रः ।।११।।

Who found – अनु अविन्दन्, after forty winters – चत्वारिंश्याम, dwelling – क्षियन्तम्, in mountains – पर्वतेषु, as glacier – शम्बरम्, sleeping as a demonic serpent – अहिम्, showing his strength – ओजायमानः, and killed him – जघान; He, O men, is *Indra*.**11**.

MacDonell translates this as:

> Who in the fortieth autumn found out *Shamber* dwelling in the mountains; Who has slain the serpent as he showed his strength, son of *Dānu*, as he lay; He, O men, is *Indra*.

This meaning makes no sense. Dr. Pavagi refers to this *Mantra* in *The Vedic Fathers of Geology* and translates *Shambaram* as glacier. The glacier is a mass of ice formed by the accumulation of snow in the valleys of mountains. It takes several winters for their formation when snow upon snow is accumulated and by pressure it becomes hard. This period is referred to in the *Mantra* as forty years. It has to be investigated if the formation of a glacier takes forty years. The accumulated formation of the glacier is referred to in this *Mantra* when it says that the glacier lies in the mountain as a demonic serpent. It is compared to a serpent because the glacier is formed in the valleys of mountains which are generally of serpentine shape. The snow does not melt but gets deeper and deeper with every

winter. The whole glacier which is named here as *Shambaram* looks like a serpent – अहिः. When with pressure it moves on like a river of snow it is something like a demonic serpent moving. *Indra* is said to have killed it when it moves away into a river or into the ocean. Thus, its disappearance amounts to killing it. The *Mantra* describes a geological phenomenon and ascribes it to the power of *Indra*. In this context, *Indra* may be understood as the sun, as is suggested by the next *Mantra*:

यः सप्तरश्मिः वृषभः तुविष्मान् अवासृजत् सर्तवे सप्तसिन्धून् ।
यः रौहिणम् अस्फुरत् वज्रबाहुः द्यां आरोहन्तं, सः जनासः इन्द्रः ।।१२।।

Who has seven rays – सप्तरश्मिः; Who is strong like a bull – वृषभः ; Who is mighty – तुविष्मान्; Who lets the waters – आवासृजत्, of the fast-running – सप्त (from सृपृ सर्पणे), rivers – सिन्धून, for running on – सर्तवे; Who armed with thunderbolt – वज्रबाहुः, spreads out – अस्फुरत्, the rising clouds – आरोहन्तम् रोहिणम्, in the sky – द्याम्. He, O men, is Indra.**12**.

In this *Mantra* the word *Indra* is used for the sun. Sun has seven rays – सप्तरश्मिः. They are: red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, and violet. MacDonell translates this word as 'seven-reined' (hard to restrain), meaning that the sun is mounting on a chariot drawn by seven horses. But, wherever there is a mention of seven horses of the sun, only the seven rays of the sun are meant. MacDonell translates the second stanza as: "Who armed with the bolt spurned, *Rauhiṇam* – रौहिणम् – as he scaled heaven." Here MacDonell says that *Rauhiṇa* – रौहिण – is a demon who is ascending the heaven to attack *Indra*. This is only a figment of imagination. The simple meaning of the *Mantra* is that *Indra* – the sun – has seven rays, is mighty strong like a bull, causes the rivers to flow, spreads out the rising clouds in the sky. That powerful force is *Indra*. MacDonell bases his translation on *Sāyan*, and in this, both are chips of the same block.

द्यावा चित् अस्मै पृथिवी नमन्ते, शुष्मात् चित् अस्य पर्वताः भयन्ते
यः सोमपाः, निचितः, वज्रबाहुः, यः वज्रहस्तः, सः जनासः इन्द्रः ।।१३।।

Even the Heaven and the Earth prostrate before Him; Before His strength even the mountains are afraid; He is the protector of peace – सोमपाः; He is all consciousness – निचितः; He is the holder of the thunderbolt in his arms – वज्रबाहुः; and the holder of the thunderbolt in his hand – वज्रहस्तः; He, O men, is Indra.**13**.

Holding the thunderbolt in his hand means that he comes down with a heavy hand in the execution of his laws.

यः सुवन्तम् अवति, यः पचन्तम्, यः शंसन्तम्, यः शशमानं ऊती ।
यस्य ब्रह्म वर्धनम्, यस्य सोमः, यस्य इदं राधः, सः जनासः
इन्द्रः ।।१४।।

Who with his aid – ऊती, protects – अवति, the people who give rise to new thoughts – सुवन्तम्; People who assimilate those thoughts – पचन्तम्; People who propagate those thoughts – शंसन्तम्; And people who praise those thoughts – शशमानम्; Whose is the propagation – वर्धनम्, of the *Spiritual knowledge* – ब्रह्म; Whose is the *wordly knowledge* – सोमः; Whose is the knowledge coming out of the happy blend of these two – राधः (राध साध संसिद्धौ); He, O men, is Indra.**14**.

MacDonell following *Sāyan* applies this *Mantra* to the *Soma Rasa* (सोम रस). He translates it as follows:

Who with his aid helps him that presses *Soma*, Him that bakes, Him that offers praise, Him that has prepared the sacrifice; Whom prayer, Whom Soma, Whom this gift strengthens: He, O men, is Indra.

यः सुन्वते पचते दुध्रः, आ चित् वाजं दर्दर्षि, सः किल असि सत्यः ।
वयं ते इन्द्र विश्वह प्रियासः सुवीरासः विदथम् आ वदेम ।।१५।।

He who grants – दुध्रः, the desires of those who give rise to new thoughts – सुन्वते; And those who assimilate those thoughts – पचते; And even gives strength – वाजं दर्दर्षि, to

those thoughts; That thou, to be sure, art true – स: किल असि सत्य:. O Indra, we ever, always – विश्चह (विश्वेषु अह:सु), dear to thee – प्रियास:, along with our brave sons – सुवीरास:, utter praises – विदथम्, आवदेम, to thee.**15**.

In the fourteenth *Mantra* the refrain of the song is: He, O men, is Indra. In this last *Mantra*, the devotee says: To such a deity we wish our children offer prayers. The whole of this *Sūkta* is a composite construction.

EPILOGUE

The word *Indra* occurs very frequently in the *Vedās*, particularly in the *Rig Veda*. One-fourth of the hymns in the *Rig Veda* are addressed to *Indra*. The special feature of this *Sūkta* is that every *Mantra* ends with the refrain: स: जनास: इन्द्र: – He, O men, is *Indra*. Why this proclamation? To explain this a story was coined. It is said that a *Rishi* by name *Gritsmad* (गृत्स मद) performed a *Yajña* on a grand scale. *Indra* attended the function. The *Asurās* – असुरा: – demons – were on the lookout for *Indra* to attack him as he was their enemy. When *Indra* got scent of it, he escaped, in the disguise of *Gritsmad*. The demons took him for *Gritsmad* and let him go. Later on, *Gritsmad* was passing that way. The demons caught hold of him insisting that he was *Indra* in disguise. On this *Gritsmad* uttered the *Mantrās* of the *Indra Sūkta* proclaiming: He, O men, is *Indra* – स: जनास: इन्द्र: – not I. In describing this, he mentioned the attributes of *Indra*.

On reading the *Mantrās* of the *Indra Sūkta* one can understand that there is nothing in them to justify the coining of the story. The *Mantrās* are independent assertions of the nature of *Indra*. Who is *Indra*? *Indra* is one who as soon as he manifests himself excels other divine forces by adorning the world with his powerful acts; one who makes the distressingly quaking earth steady; one who pacifies the smoke-emitting volcanoes; one who lets the waters flow in the rivers; one who generates fire from stones; one who creates all that we see in the world; one who looks after the rich as well as the poor; one who controls the movements of the earth, the sun, the moon, and the stars;

one whom people call in distress. Having been told all this, does anyone question whether or not he exists?

This description points out to three aspects of *Indra*. Spiritually, in microcosm he is the soul and in macrocosm he is God; physically, he is the sun. Most of these descriptions fit in *Indra* either as God, or as the Soul, or as the Sun. There is nothing in the *Sūkta* to suggest that *Indra* is an Anthropomorphic deity, as made out by some scholars.

The *Sūkta* contains three words that have given rise to a great myth in semitic religions – the myth of God, the Satan (Serpent), and the Tree of Knowledge. The Biblical myth is that God stationed Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden and forbade them to eat the Fruit of the Tree of Knowledge. The Satan in the form of Serpent came and beguiled them to have a taste of the Fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, which they ate. When God came to know of it He cursed the Serpent to fall on the Earth and to go about upon his belly, which means that he was deprived of hands and feet.

The three words responsible for this myth are – *Indra* (इन्द्र), *Ahih* (अहि:), and *Soma* (सोम). *Indra*, as we have pointed out, means Almighty God; *Ahih* means Serpent; *Soma* means Knowledge. Let us see how the Biblical myth arose from the *Indra Sūkta* of the *Rig Veda*.

The third *Mantra* says: 'य: हत्वा अहिम्' – Who having killed *Ahih* – the Serpent. Again in the eleventh *Mantra* it is said: 'य: अहिम् जघान' – Who killed *Ahih* – the Serpent – 'स: जनास: इन्द्र: – He is *Indra* – the Lord. Again, it is said that *Indra* is *Somapah* – सोमपा: – that is, He is the Drinker of *Soma* – Knowledge. So, piecing these bits together the myth formed is that God (*Indra*) fought with the Serpent (*Ahih*) and drank the knowledge himself (*Sompah*), throwing the Serpent from the Heaven on the Earth hurling at him the curse: Upon thy belly shalt thou go.

But this myth originated because of some words of the text, and particularly because of the word *Ahih* – अहि: – Serpent. For *Ahih* – अहि: – Serpent – there is another word used in the text (*Rig*, 1, 32, 7) which is its synonym: अहस्तपाद: अपृतन्यत् इन्द्रम् – Having no hands and feet, he

attacked *Indra*. And, really, the Serpent has neither hands nor feet. This strengthened the myth in so far as it related to the Serpent. Further, another text (*Rig*, 1, 32, 5) says: अहिः शयत उपपृक् पृथिव्याः – Having been disabled, the Serpent fell down on the Earth. All these fragments went to create a semitic myth with which the Bible starts its narration of the creation.

But this confusion was due to the misunderstanding of the meaning of the word *Ahih* – अहिः. *Ahih* means *serpent* as well as *cloud*. The cloud also has no hands and feet. It also, being killed, falls on the ground and in streams of water goes upon its belly. A physiological phenomenon described in the *Veda* has given rise to a myth which has no meaning. Ungarbed from its mythical guise, the pure form of the Vedic text is that *Indra* is he who creates thunders in the clouds and torrents of waters pour forth on the earth transforming them into fast-running rivers – *Sapt Sindhu* – सर्तवे सप्त सिन्धून्.

Not only in semitic religions, in the *Zenda-Avestha* – a religious book of the Parsis – also the words *Indra*, *Ahih*, and *Soma* have given rise to myths where also these words are mentioned in the *Avasthic* texts. There *Indra* is mentioned not as a deity but as a demon; *Ahih* is mentioned as *Verethraghna* – Vedic *Vritraghna* (वृत्रघ्न) – which is the synonymn of *Ahih* in *Veda*, and *Soma* is mentioned as *Homa* in the *Zend-Avestha*.

The *Sūkta* itself clarifies what is meant by *Indra*. When the *Veda* itself explains what is meant by a particular word, there remains no room for interpreting it in another way.

V

Īshāvāsya Chapter of the Yajur Veda

ईशावास्यम्

The Philosophy Life

The last chapter of the *Yajur Veda* begins with the words *Ishāvāsyam idam sarvam* – ईशा वास्यम् इदम् सर्वम्, meaning all that exists is pervaded by the Supreme Ruler of the universe. The chapter is so important that it forms not merely a part of the *Upanishads*, it has been given the first place among the other *Upanishads*. It epitomises the Vedic philosophy of Life. The chapter begins with:

ईशा वास्यम् इदं सर्वम्, यत् किंचित् जगत्यां जगत् ।
तेन त्यक्तेन भुंजीथाः, मा गृधः कस्यस्वित् धनम् ।।१।।

By one Supreme Ruler is this universe pervaded, whatever there is in this moving world. Hence, find your enjoyment in renunciation; do not covet; whose is the wealth.**1**.

In this stanza of four parts, four principles are enunciated. First: The world is pervaded by God – the Supreme Ruler. The idea conveyed is that He is omnipresent. Second: The universe is not stationary, it is moving and every atom of it is in motion – जगत्यां जगत्. No motion is possible without the mover. The Supreme Lord is not only present in the universe, He is the cause of this motion. Third: As He is installed in everything, therefore, He is the maker of all, and what you enjoy is out of His Grace. Hence, find your enjoyment in renunciation as it is out of His bounty that

you enjoy. Fourth: Do not covet the things of the world because nothing belongs to you, everything belongs to Him who is the Lord of the world.

These four principles contain the Vedic Philosophy of Life, the central idea being to enjoy with renunciation.

कुर्वन् एव इह कर्माणि जिजीविषेत् शतम् समाः ।
एवं त्वयि न अन्यथा अस्ति, न कर्म लिप्यते नरे ॥२॥

Aspire, O man, to live by renunciatory deeds for one hundred years. Thus alone, and not otherwise, do the deeds not affect the man.**2**.

The basic philosophy of the *Vedās* is non-attachment, as advised in the previous *Mantra* – त्यक्तेन भुंजीथाः. The *Vedās* do not say that one should run away from the world. They say: Enjoy the good things of life, but let them not overpower you. Do not be lost in them, do not attach yourself to them for it is the attachment that is the cause of suffering and misery.

असुर्याः नाम ते लोकाः अन्धेन तमसा आवृताः ।
तान् ते प्रेत्य अभिगच्छन्ति ये के च आत्महनः जनाः ॥३॥

To those regions which are known as the regions of the *Asurās*, where utter darkness prevails, surely go, after death, all such men who destroy themselves.**3**.

Though in the previous *Mantra* action – *Karma* – is recommended, yet what sort of action? An action may be elevating to the soul, it may be destructive also. The performers of destructive action are called here the *Asurās*. The word *Asura* – असुर, is used for men of evil deeds. Where do men of evil deeds go after death or even in life which due to crimes may be styled some sort of death. The *Mantra* says that they go to the regions of utter darkness. The regions of utter darkness means a life with no light, a life of forsakenness. Those who destroy themselves by evil deeds – आत्महनः, suffer a life of darkness, sorrow, and suffering. There is no light in their life. The words 'regions

of darkness', 'destruction of oneself', 'after death', etc. are symbolic. Evil deeds themselves may symbolise death. This death may lead to darkness in this life itself on account of which crimes may be termed death as they extinguish the light of life within.

अनेजत् एकम् मनसः जवीयः, न एनत् देवाः आप्नुवन् पूर्वम् अर्षत् । तत् धावतः अन्यान् अति एति तिष्ठत्, तस्मिन् अपः मातरिश्वा दधाति ।।४।।

There is one who does not move but still without movement is more vigorous than the mind; The senses do not perceive Him, but He is there even before the senses; Without moving, and standing motionless, He outruns the others; Wind, though light, standing in Him – with his support – bears the waters, though heavy.**4**.

It is a poetic expression to convey the idea that He is everywhere.

तत् एजति, तत् न एजति, तत् दूरे, तत् उ अन्तिके ।
तत् अन्तः अस्य सर्वस्य, तत् उ सर्वस्य अस्य वाह्यतः ।।५।।

He moves all, but Himself He does not move; To the ignorant He is far away, but to the wise he is at hand. He pervades inside and outside of all.**5**.

यः तु सर्वाणि भूतानि आत्मनि एव अनुपश्यति ।
सर्व भूतेषु च आत्मानं ततः न विजुगुप्सते ।।६।।

He who contemplates all beings in the Spirit – आत्मनि – and the Spirit in all beings – सर्वभूतेषु, does not view with contempt any creature.**6**.

यस्मिन् सर्वाणि भूतानि आत्मा एव अभूत् विजानतः ।
तत्र कः मोहः कः शोकः एकत्वम् अनुपश्यतः ।।७।।

How can there be attachment and sorrow in one who with full knowledge perceives oneness everywhere, and in whom all beings are *Ātma* – आत्मा, Spirit alone.7.

सः परि अगात्, शुक्रम्, अकायम्, अस्नाविरम्, शुद्धम्, अपापविद्धम् । कविः, मनीषी, परिभूः, स्वयंभूः । याथातथ्यतः अर्थान् व्यदधात् शाश्वतीभ्यः समाभ्यः ।।८।।

Pandit Gurudatta Vidyārthi translates this *Mantra* as follows:

He overspreads all creatures. He is entirely Spirit without the form either of a minute body, or an extended one, which is liable to impressions or organisation. He is the ruler of intellect, self-existent, pure, perfect, omniscient and omnipresent. He has from all eternity been assigning to all creatures their respective purposes.**8**.

As this is an important *Mantra* throwing light on the various aspects of God, we have given our translation with an explanation in the miscellaneous *Mantra*s (Chapter XVI).

अन्धं तमः प्रविशन्ति ये अविद्यां उपासते ।
ततः भूय इव ते तमः य उ विद्यायां रताः ।।९।।

They enter darkness who worship *Avidyā*; In far greater darkness enter they who overinvolve themselves in *Vidyā*.**9**.

What does the *Veda* mean when it says that those who overinvolve themselves in *Vidyā* enter far greater darkness than those who worship *Avidyā*. The plain meaning is that *Avidyā* – ignorance – leads one to darkness, and *Vidyā* – knowledge – leads to greater darkness than the darkness of *Avidyā* – ignorance.

The use of the words *Vidyā* and *Avidyā* in this text is not the common use of them as we understand them. Here *Avidyā* means rank materialism; *Vidyā* means rank spiritualism. The Vedic conception is that rank materialism leads to darkness, but rank spiritualism leads to greater

darkness as its devotee is deprived of the fruits of worldly enjoyment which the materialists get. The Vedic concept of life is a synthesis of materialism and spiritualism as both are real. Real in the sense that the world does exist, and the soul and God also exist. The course of life should be moulded accepting both as realities of existence. In a happy blend of both these points of view one dispels darkness of *Avidyā* and utter darkness of *Vidyā*. The rank materialist is fortunate in that he at least enjoys the world; the rank spiritualist is unfortunate because he neither enjoys the world nor spiritualism leads him to utterly negate the existence of matter in this work-a-day life.

अन्यत् आहुः विद्यया, अन्यत् आहुः अविद्यया ।
इति शुश्रुम धीराणाम्, ये नः तत् विचचक्षिरे ॥१०॥

By *Vidyā* - विद्या - spiritualism, one thing is meant, by *Avidyā* - अविद्या - materialism, another thing is meant. This we have heard from steadfast wise men who have explained us their meaning.**10**.

विद्यां च अविद्यां च यः तद् वेद उभयं सह ।
अविद्या मृत्युं तीर्त्वा विद्यया अमृतम् अश्नुते ॥११॥

He who synthesises in his life both *Vidyā* (spiritualism) and *Avidyā* (materialism); he crosses (the river of death) by means of *Avidyā* (materialism); and enjoys immortality - अमृतम्, by means of *Vidyā* (spiritualism).**11**.

Here *Avidyā* - materialism - is said to be helpful in crossing the river of death. One overcomes diseases by means of drugs invented by science; that is what is meant by overcoming death. *Avidyā* represents science, and science represents materialism in the Vedic terminology, but materialism can go only so far, and no further. It can give health by means of life-saving drugs, but human's search is for immortality which can be attained by *Vidyā* - spiritualism - alone.

अन्धं तमः प्रविशन्ति ये असंभूतिं उपासते ।
ततः भूय इव ते तमः य उ संभूत्यां रताः ॥१२॥

They enter blinding darkness who worship *Asambhooti* – असंभूति; In far greater darkness enter they who overinvolve themselves in *Sambhooti* – संभूति.**12**.

What is the meaning of *Asambhooti* and *Sambhooti*? *Asambhooti* means: *A* = not, *Sambhooti* = living together, that is, not living together, which means individualism. One who is individualistic, in utter disregard of others, is a selfish person. The text says that a selfish man is living in blinding darkness. *Sambhooti* means: *Sam* – सम्, = together, *Bhooti* = living, that is, living together, which in the modern terminology may mean socialism. Just as *Avidyā* means rank materialism and *Vidyā* means rank spiritualism, similarly, *Asambhooti* means rank individualism and *Sambhooti* means rank socialism. Rank individualism leads to darkness and rank socialism leads to greater darkness because no socialist can neglect his individual interests. There has to be a happy blend of both for life to run smoothly avoiding overinvolvement in either individual or collective life. Here the text speaks of the evils of both – individualism and socialism – unrelated with each other.

Pandit Gurudatta Vidyārthi translates this *Mantra* as follows:

Miserable are they who worship atoms as the efficient cause of the world; but far more miserable are they who worship the visible things made of atoms.

अन्यत् एव आहुः संभवात्, अन्यत् आहुः असम्भवात् ।
इति शुश्रुम धीराणाम् ये नः तत् विचचक्षिरे ॥१३॥

By *Sambhava* – सम्भव, one thing is meant, by *Asambhava* – असम्भव, quite another thing is meant. This we have heard from steadfast wise men who have explained us their meaning.**13**.

संभूतिं च विनाशं च यः तत् वेद उभयं सह ।
विनाशेन मृत्युं तीर्त्वा संभूत्या अमृतम् अश्नुते ।।१४।।

He who synthesises in his life both *Sambhooti* – सम्भूति – socialism, and *Vināsh* – विनाश – individualism, he crosses the river of death by means of *Vināsh* – विनाश – individualism, and enjoys immortality – अमृतम् – by means of *Sambhooti* – सम्भूति, socialism.**14**.

We have translated *Vināsh* – विनाश, as individualism. Why? Because in this text *Vināsh* – विनाश – replaces the word *Asambhooti* – असम्भूति, and *Asambhooti* in text number 12 we have translated as individualism. Rank individualism leads to blinding darkness and rank socialism leads to greater darkness, for such a person neglects his self and his family. Hence, the proper course of life is a healthy combination of individualism and socialism, as propounded in this text. We have used the words 'individualism' and 'socialism' not in their technical sense. By individualism we mean an out-and-out selfish outlook on life; by socialism we mean a total dedication to the welfare of others to the neglect of one's self and one's family.

Pandit Gurudatta Vidyārthi translates this *Mantra* as follows:

He, who realises both, enjoys after death which is the consequence of the worship of things visible, immortality, the fruit of the realisation of divine power displayed in atoms.

हिरण्मयेन पात्रेण सत्यस्य अपिहितम् मुखम् ।
तत् त्वम् पूषन् अपावृणु सत्यधर्माय दृष्टये ।।१५।।

The face of the truth is hidden by the veil of the golden cover. O thou who givest the sustenance to the world – पूषन्, unveil that face – अपावृणु, so that we may see the truth and know the purpose of our life.**15**.

पूषन् एकर्षे यम सूर्य प्राजापत्य व्यूह रश्मीन् समूह ।
तेजः यत् ते रूपम् कल्याणतमम् तत् ते पश्यामि,
यः असौ पुरुषः सः अहम् अस्मि ।।१६।।

O sustainer of universe, sage of sages, controller of every thing, light of lights, life of creation, gather up thy rays so that I may be able to see thy form full of glory and beatitude. I am a reflection of that beautiest and glorious form of thine.**16**.

वायुः अनिलं अमृतं अथ इदम् भस्मान्तम् शरीरम् ।
ओ३म् क्रतो स्मर कृतम् स्मर, क्रतो स्मर कृतम् स्मर ।।१७।।

The air – the breath we breathe in – is sustaining the immortal within; this gross body lasts till it is cremated. O thou doer of deeds – *Karto* – क्रतो, remember the deeds thou hast done, remember the deeds thou hast done.**17**.

अग्ने नय सुपथा राये अस्मान् विश्वानि देव वयुनानि विद्वान् ।
युयोधि अस्मत् जुहुराणम् एनः, भूयिष्ठां ते नमः उक्ति विधेम ।।१८।।

O self-effulgent power of the universe – *Agne* – अग्ने, lead us all by the path of rectitude. O *Deva*, thou knowest all good deeds. Fight out, out of us, the wicked, evil, and sinful deeds. We utter these words to Thee in humble obeisance again and again.**18**.

EPILOGUE

This chapter of the *Yajur Veda* enunciates the basic philosophy of life. How should life be lived? There is the matter-of-fact world before us with attractive, enjoyable things. Witnessing these, the rank materialist says: Enjoy these for they are meant for enjoyment, otherwise why should they be there? The spiritualist warns that enjoyment will lead to dissipation, to weakening of vitality thereby shortening the span of life. The rank spiritualist says that involvement in the world is the cause of suffering; hence, one should keep away from the inviting temptations. The Vedic concept says that there should be a happy blend of both. It says that one should enjoy the world, but should not be so much involved in it that its loss may affect life itself.

Be in the world but also be out of it. Whatever you do should be with a feeling of non-attachment. The Vedic concept of life's philosophy is that of non-attachment. This is the core of the first *Mantra*: तेन त्यक्तेन भुंजीथाः – enjoy with detachment.

The second concept enunciated is that of *Karma* – कर्म. Detachment does not mean no action. You cannot renounce action even if you wish. Do act, don't vegetate, but action should not bind you. Act, but remain unattached. Enjoy the world, but be not lost in it – त्यक्तेन भुजीथाः. It is attachment that is the cause of suffering and misery. It is a fact of life, what you have today – money, position, status – you will have to part with it tomorrow. Act, but be always ready for that moment in life when all what you have gained may be lost. If that happens, as it does happen sometimes, then don't break. A life of equipoise is the desideratum of the Vedic philosophy. Untoward happenings may not disturb the peace of mind is inherent in this philosophy of attachment-renunciation.

Again, these 18 *Mantrās* impart a new meaning to the words *Vidyā* and *Avidyā*. In common parlance, *Vidyā* means knowledge, *Avidyā* means ignorance. But this is a superficial meaning. *Vidyā* here means spiritual knowledge; *Avidyā* means material knowledge. All modern sciences, in the Vedic terminology, are *Avidyā* – ignorance, only spiritual knowledge is *Vidyā* proper. By *Avidyā* – physical sciences – you can conquer death – अविद्यया मृत्युं तीर्त्वा, but thereby you do not enjoy immortality – न अमृतं अश्नुते. What can the physical sciences do? They invent drugs to allay pains and subside diseases, but they cannot open your eyes to the life divine. Divinity, which is another name for immortality, can be attained only by a spiritual life. That is what the text says.

Like *Vidyā* and *Avidyā*, two other words are used with a different meaning from the one we are used to. The words are *Sambhooti* (सम्भूति) and *Asambhooti* (असम्भूति). We have translated the word *Sambhooti* as *Sam* – सम् – together, *Bhooti* – भूति = to be or to live, thus *Sambhooti* – सम्भूति – means to live together; *Asambhooti* as *A* – अ = not, *Sambhooti* – सम्भूति = to be or to live to-

gether. Accordingly, *Sambhooti* (सम्भूति) means 'to live together' – a social life – socialism; *Asambhooti* (असंभूति) means 'not to live together' – an individualistic selfish life, individualism.

The text says that as there should be a happy blend of materialism (*Avidyā*) and spiritualism (*Vidyā*), there should be the same blend between individualism (*Asambhooti*) and socialism (*Sambhooti*). None of them can survive standing by itself. Materialism and spiritualism, similarly individualism and socialism, are complementary to each other. Life is not a one-side track; it is so comprehensive that it covers materialism, spiritualism, individualism, and socialism by effecting a synthesis between all of them. According to the Vedic concept, life is a synthesis of the opposites.

The text concludes that what meets the eye is not the truth. The truth is hidden behind. The clouds cover the rays of the sun, and unless the clouds dissolve the sunshine will not be within our reach. God shines with all his glory but *Prakriti* – प्रकृति – Matter – comes between us and the Divinity. The devotee prays: O Sustainer of the universe, unveil thy face by dissolving the darkening clouds of ignorance so that I may witness thy glory and beatitude – तत्वं पूषन् अपावृणु सत्यधर्माय दृष्टये.

VI

Prithivī Sūkta - 1

पृथिवी सूक्त – १

The Earth as Mother

The *Prithivī Sūkta* is a chapter of the 12th Part (*Kānda*) of the *Atharva Veda*. It deals with the Earth (*Bhoomi*) as our benefactress. Man from the beginning of history has his social and cultural roots grounded in the Earth he associates himself with his birth. He praises the hills and the dales, the rivers and the forests he has grown up with. This is his Motherland, and his home in that land is his 'home, sweet home, there is no place like home'.

The *Sūkta* reminds one of the feelings one develops with one's Motherland. Out of such emotions spring forth the songs as '*Vande Mātaram*' - the national song of our Motherland - India.

Here is what the *Atharva Veda* says about the Earth - one's Motherland - or the land of the State - *Rāshtra* - (राष्ट्र), one belongs to. Consequently, some have styled it as a *Rāshtra Sūkta* (राष्ट्र सूक्त).

सत्यं बृहत्, ऋतं उग्रं, दीक्षा, तपः, ब्रह्म, यज्ञः पृथिवीम् धारयन्ति ।
सा नो भूतस्य, भव्यस्य पत्नी, उरुं लोकं पृथिवी नः कृणोतु ।।१।।

Truth which by its very nature is great (सत्यं बृहत्), Righteousness which by its very nature is irresistable (ऋतं उग्रं), Devotion or devotedness (दीक्षा), Hard labour or Perseverance (तपः), Determination to be great (ब्रह्म), but all the same willingness to sacrifice one's narrow interest (यज्ञ) - these are the virtues that sustain the Earth or a State.**1**.

Earth is the mistress of all what was ours, what is ours, and what would be ours. Let the Earth open for us her spaces far-flung, great, and wide.

The verse enumerates six virtues that sustain the Earth or a State. They are – Truth, Righteousness, Devotion to a Cause, Hard labour, Determination to overcome obstacles in the path of Greatness, and Sacrifice of Selfishness. One in whom these combine, the Earth welcomes him with open arms.

असंबाधं बध्यतः मानवानाम्, यस्याः उद्वतः प्रवतः समं बहु ।
नानावीर्याः ओबधीः या विभर्ति, पृथिवी नः प्रथतां राध्यतो नः ।।२।।

Let the Earth inspire the intelligence of men to rend asunder the obstacles that obstruct their ambitions to level down her unevenness in the form of high and low surfaces, even though there be abundance of smooth planes. The Earth bears herbs of various virtues. Let the Earth spread out for us and fulfil our needs.**2**.

For a successful life in the world one comes across small and big obstacles which are compared here with low and big surfaces of the Earth. One has to surmount these obstacles and make one's path even and smooth. Just as the Earth made smooth and level bears innumerable herbs potent to cure the illnesses, so life though fraught with one thousand and one difficulties is successfully lived by getting inspiration from the Earth.

यस्यां समुद्रः, उत सिन्धुः, आपः, यस्यां अन्नं, कृष्टयः संबभूवुः ।
यस्यां इदम् जिन्वति प्राणत् एजत् सा नो भूमिः पूर्वपेये दधातु ।।३।।

On whom rest the ocean, the rivers, the waters of wells, the tanks, and the lakes; On whom grow grains and other agricultural produce; On whom exist all that breathe and move – let the Earth place us also in the hands of the Lord who has already granted protection to those who deserve it, even before they are born.**3**.

यस्याः चतस्रः प्रदिशः पृथिव्याः, यस्यां अन्नं कृष्टयः संबभूवुः ।
या विभर्ति बहुधा प्राणत् एजत् सा नो भूमिः गोषु अपि अन्ने दधातु ।।४।।

The Earth to whom belong the four quarters – the East, the West, the North, and the South; On whom all grains and agricultural produce grow; Who bears the innumerable beings that breathe and move; Let that Earth place us in the midst of plentiful agricultural lands growing food and kine yielding milk.**4**.

यस्यां पूर्वे पूर्वजनाः विचक्रिरे यस्यां देवाः असुरान् अभ्यवर्तयन् ।
गवाम् अश्वानाम् वयसः च विष्ठा भगं वर्चः पृथिवी नो दधातु ।।५।।

The Earth, on whom people in olden times attained achievements; the Earth in whom the divine forces defeated the evil ones; the Earth where the kine, the horses, the birds found their habitat – let that Earth grant us fortune and brilliance.**5**.

In this verse the Elders are extolled for having achieved success in defeating the evil on the Earth which may inspire us to follow them and to seek blessings from the Mother Earth in the form of fortune and grandeur which is in her power to bestow. The blessing is sought for possessing the kine and the horses which respectively represent all forms of nourishment and conveyance on the Earth. Birds represent fortune in the sky. All of them can be had if the Earth is explored and her blessings are invoked by determination, by putting one's hardest labour directed to production.

The mention of kine, horses, and birds is significant. The kine as yielding milk represent nourishment; the horses as they are the fastest runners represent activity; the birds as they soar high in the sky represent all that is above the Earth. As the Earth sustains the kine, the horses, and the birds, she may also sustain the human beings who invoke her blessing.s

विश्वंभरा वसुधानी प्रतिष्ठा हिरण्यवक्षा जगतः निवेशनी ।
वैश्वानरं विभ्रती भूमिः अग्नि इन्द्र ऋषभा द्रविणे नः दधातु ।।६।।

Fulfilling the needs of everyone, holding within herself all kinds of riches, firm and stable, containing gold in her entrails, repository of all that moves and has its being, bearing fire within which is useful for the whole of mankind, let the Earth, whose Lord is *Indra*, assign us wealth.**6**.

यां रक्षन्ति अस्वप्नाः विश्वदानीम् देवाः भूमिं पृथिवीं अप्रमादम् ।
सा नो मधु प्रियम् दुहाम् अथो उक्षतु वर्चसा ॥७॥

The divine forces sleeplessly and ceaselessly protect the Earth who gives to the world all that she has; Let the Earth yield us honey and all that is dear to us and then saturate us with grandeur.7.

Here all the bounties are acknowledged with reverence and gratitude. The Earth gives us all that we need and everything that is dear to us. It is further said that the Earth by herself is helpless. It is the divine forces that protect the Earth. And this protection comes as if the divine protector is at his job every moment, day and night, without a wink, without any relaxation.

या अर्णवे अधि सलिलं अग्रे आसीत्, यां मायाभिः अन्वचरन् मनीषिणः । यस्याः हृदयं परमे व्योमन् सत्येन आवृतम् अमृतस्य पृथिव्याः । सा नो भूमिः त्विषिम् बलं राष्ट्रे दधातु उत्तमे ॥८॥

The Earth was in a quasi-liquid state in the beginning of creation surrounded as she was by ocean in all directions. This was followed by the skilful (divine forces), by various devices and (she came to the present solid state). The immortal heart of the Earth covered with the Truth rests in the highest firmament. Let the Earth instal us in a state (government) of splendour, strength, and highest good.**8**.

In this verse two important statements are made. One – that the Earth in the beginning was in a liquid state and was brought down to the present solid state through skilful devices by the Divine Forces. Second – that the immortal heart of the Earth is covered with the Truth and rests in the highest region. The first statement is corroborated by science

which says that life came out of water. As regards the second statement, it means that the Truth is the heart-beat of life and nothing but the Truth prevails in the world though momentarily we may find falsehood forging ahead. The truth shines at the top with all its brilliance. The devotee prays that by the Grace of God he may live in that region of the Earth where the Government may be strong, administering to the highest good of her inhabitants where the Truth reigns supreme.

यस्यां आपः परिचराः समानीः अहोरात्रे अप्रमादं क्षरन्ति ।
सा नो भूमिः भूरिधारा पयः दुहाम् अथो उक्षतु वर्चसा ॥९॥

The Earth whereupon the waters spread everywhere in the form of wells, lakes, and rivers, and flow without cessation equally everywhere, day and night; let that Earth with abundant streams, also of milk, may now saturate us with grandeur.**9**.

Here the waters and the milk have been placed in the same category. The State in which one yearns to live is pictured as one where there is no dearth of water – an essential ingredient of life, and milk – an essential ingredient of nourishment.

याम् अश्विनौ अमिमाताम् विष्णुः यस्याम् विचक्रमे । इन्द्रो याम् चक्रे आत्मने अनमित्रां शचीपतिः । सा नो भूमिः विसृजताम् माता पुत्राय मे पयः ॥१०॥

The Earth who is measured by day and night, in whom the sun overstrides her movements, who has been rendered free from enemies by *Indra* – the Lord of Action, let that Earth release us water and milk as the mother does to her children.**10**.

गिरयः ते पर्वताः हिमवन्तः हिरण्यं ते पृथिवी स्योनम् अस्तु । बभ्रुं कृष्णं रोहिणीं विश्वरूपां ध्रुवां भूमिं पृथिवीं इन्द्रगुप्ताम् । अजीतः अहतः अक्षतः अहम् अध्यष्ठां पृथिवीम् अहम् ॥११॥

O Earth! Let thy hills, snowy mountains and forests be pleasant; let me – unconquered, unwounded, and uninjured – stay on and inhabit the Earth protected by *Indra* – the Lord of Supreme Strength, the Earth of multiple hues and colours – brown, black, and red, the Earth who is steady and spread far and wide.**11**.

यत् ते मध्यं पृथिवी यत् च नभ्यं याः ते ऊर्जः तन्वः संबभूवुः । तासु नः धेहि अभि नः पवस्व माता भूमिः पुत्रः अहम् पृथिव्याः । पर्जन्यः पिता स उ नः पिपर्तु ॥१२॥

O Earth! whatever thou containest in thyself, in the centre of thyself, whatever grows out of thyself – from out of thy body – set us in those surroundings. O Earth! purify us. O Earth! thou art my Mother, I am thy Son. The cloud that drenches the Earth with rain so that there be plenty of growth is my Father. Let him also protect us.**12**.

यस्यां वेदिं परिगृह्णन्ति भूम्यां यस्यां यज्ञं तन्वते विश्वकर्माणः । यस्यां मीयन्ते स्वरवः पृथिव्यां ऊर्ध्वाः शुक्लाः आहुत्याः पुरस्तात् । सा नो भूमिः वर्धयद् वर्धमाना ॥१३॥

The Earth on whom, the experts in all skills, surround and enclose the sacrificial altar; the Earth on whom the skilful extended the *Yajñya* far and wide; on whom they set up according to measurement posts high and bright before the beginning of oblations; let that Earth increasingly make us great.**13**.

This verse imagines a spiritual expansion by way of propagation of *Yajñya* everywhere. It imagines a world in which posts, high and bright, flying the sacrificial flag are set up all over the world and the atmosphere is resounding with the chanting of the *Veda Mantrā*s offering oblations. The devotee invokes the Mother Earth to impart him greatness as gradually the significance of *Yajñya* (sacrifice) is understood and the spirit of the *Yajñya* pervades the Earth.

यः नः द्वेषत् पृथिवी यः पृतन्याद् यः अभिदासात् मनसा यः बधेन ।
तं नः भूमे रन्धय पूर्वकृत्वरि ।।१४।।

Whosoever hates us, O Earth! whosoever marches armies against us, whosoever tries to destroy us in mind or tries to kill us in body, O Earth, exterminate him for us, because you act before the other acts.**14**.

त्वत् जाताः त्वयि चरन्ति मर्त्याः, त्वं बिभर्षि द्विपदः चतुष्पदः । तव इमे पृथिवी पञ्च मानवाः, येभ्यः ज्योतिः अमृतम् मर्त्येभ्यः उद्यन् सूर्यः रश्मिभिः आतनोति ।।१५।।

All mortals – bipeds and quadrupeds – are born of thee, move about on thee. Thou bearest them and sustainest them. O Earth! all these manifold mortals for whom the rising sun with his rays extends his immortal light are thine.**15**.

There is a mention of 'five men' (*Panch Mānavāh* – पंच मानवाः) in the text. 'Five men' in the Vedic culture represent a group of men, just as *Panchāyat* (पंचायत) means the representative group of a village. They may be five, or even more or less. Here also 'five men' means a group of men.

ताः नः प्रजाः सं दुहताम् समग्राः वाचः, मधु पृथिवि धेहि मह्यम् ।।१६।।

Let the united voice of all the creatures yield one thing for all of us: O Earth! give us sweetness of life, like the sweetness of honey.**16**.

विश्वस्वं, मातरम् ओषधीनाम्, ध्रुवां भूमिं पृथिवीं धर्मणा धृताम् ।
शिवां स्योनाम् अनु चरेम विश्वहा ।।१७।।

The Earth owns all; she is the progenitor of medicinal herbs that heal; though rotating she is fixed; she is main-

tained by the basic principles that uphold society; she administers to our well-being; she is so pleasant. On the Earth we move about who has the potentiality even to destroy all that exists upon her.**17**.

महत् सधस्थं, महती बभूविथ, महान् वेगः एजथुः वेपथुः ते । महान् इन्द्रः रक्षति अप्रमादम् । सा नो भूमे प्र रोचय हिरण्यस्य इव संदृशि, मा नः द्विक्षत कश्चन ॥१८॥

O Earth! great is thy expanse, and great thou becometh. Great is thy force, great trembling and great quaking. Only the greatness of *Indra* – the Almighty Supreme Being – working ceaselessly can protect thee under these conditions. O Earth! make us shine with the shineness of gold and bless us so that none may hate us.**18**.

The devotee, seeing the vastness of the Earth, and she being fixed and stationary, in spite of being shaken, off and on by earthquakes, is lost in the admiration of the *Lord Indra* – the Almighty Supreme Being – who can work such a miracle as upholding the stupendously vast Earth in empty space without falling and going to pieces. It is the poet's imagination where physics feels shy to tread.

VII

Prithivī Sūkta – 2

पृथिवी सूक्त – २

The Earth as Mother

In the previous translation of the 18 *Mantrās* of the *Prithivī Sūkta* of the 12th *Kānda* of the *Atharva Veda*, we have given the import of the *Mantrās*. Let us proceed with the 19th *Mantra*.

अग्निः भूम्यां, ओषधीषु अग्नि आपः विभ्रति, अग्निः अश्मसु ।
अग्निः अन्तः पुरुषेषु, गोषु, अश्वेषु अग्नयः ।।१९।।

Having spoken of the greatness of the Earth in the previous verse, the present verse speaks of the other supreme element of the universe – the Fire. It says:

Fire is in the Earth, fire is in the Herbs, fire in the Waters, even Stones contain fire. Not only in the Inanimate and the Vegetable world, even in the Animate world its life is maintained by fire – in Men, Kine, and Horses it is the fire that keeps them alive.**19**.

By no stretch of imagination *Agni* here can mean a deity. *Agni*, here, definitely means fire, and fire again means heat generated by it. It is due to heat that vegetation grows and life in the world of the living is maintained. All hydro-electric plants are pouring forth fire in the form of electricity out of water; solid, when broken, emits heat and fire – and hence the *Mantra* says that there is fire in water and stone.

अग्निः दिवः आतपति, अग्नेः देवस्य उरु अन्तरिक्षम् ।
अग्नि मर्तासः इन्धते हव्यवाहम् घृतप्रियम् ।।२०।।

Fire or heat generated by the Sun gives warmth to the world; this vast atmosphere belongs to the divine fire, for look to the Starry heaven which is studded with fiery constellations; mortals kindle fire which loves ghee and carries the oblation offered to it far and wide.**20**.

अग्निवासाः पृथिवी, असितज्ञुः, त्विषीमन्ते संशितं मा कृणोतु ।।२१।।

Thus, let the Earth who is surrounded by fire all around as if she were clad with it, bearing fire in the animate and the inanimate world, and knowing the white flames as well as the black smoke, make me brilliant and sharp of intellect.**21**.

The Earth appears inert and fire appears brisk and active with its flames on the assault. A combination of these two makes the world alive. This prompts the devotee to pray that one, which inhabits the body which is nothing but a combination of particles of dust. But as the Earth who is also nothing but a combination of particles of dust is enkindled into life, so let the fire of soul enkindle the body into activity.

भूम्यां देवेभ्यः ददति यज्ञं हव्यं अरंकृतम् । भूम्यां मनुष्याः जीवन्ति स्वधया अन्नेन मर्त्याः । सा नः भूमिः प्राणं आयुः दधातु । जरदष्टिं मा पृथिवी कृणोतु ।।२२।।

It is on the Earth that beautifully done and ornamented offerings are given to the persons divine as if they were being offered in a sacred function; It is on the Earth that mortal men live with their own vigour complemented with food. Let that Earth enable us to breathe long, live long; Let that Earth do us the favour to attain old age.**22**.

यः ते गन्धः पृथिवि संबभूव, यं बिभ्रति ओषधयः, यं आपः । यं गंधर्वाः अप्सरसः च भेजिरे, तेन मा सुरभिं कृणु, मा नः द्विक्षत कश्चन ।।२३।।

O Earth, what an exquisitely sweet odour one experiences

emanating from thee; selfsame odour bears herbs and waters; the same odour is shared by songsters and songstresses; with that odour do thou make me odorous. Let no one hate me.**23**.

The devotee prays that as an exquisitely sweet odour issuing forth from the Earth is a source of attraction, similarly he should smell sweet so that no one may hate him. Who hates a flower that spreads sweetness all around?

यः ते गन्धः पुष्करम् आविवेश, यम् संजभ्रुः सूर्यायाः विवाहे ।
अमर्त्याः पृथिवि गन्धं अग्रे, तेन मा सुरभिं कृणु, मा नः द्विक्षत कश्चन ।।२४।।

O Earth, what an exquisitely sweet odour emanating from thee has entered into the lotus; the odour that is procured at the wedding of the bride; the odour that the immortals treat foremost of the earth. Do me the favour of smelling sweet with that odour so that no one may hate me.**24**.

यः ते गन्धः पुरुषेषु स्त्रीषु पुंसु भगः रुचिः । यः अश्वेषु वीरेषु यः मृगेषु उत हस्तिषु । कन्यायां वर्चः यद् भूमे, तेन अस्मान् अपि संसृज, मा नः द्विक्षत कश्चन ।।२५।।

O Earth, what sweet odour, magnificence, and brilliance of thine is found in human beings, in women and men; what in horses, in heroes, in deers, and in elephants; what splendour in a maiden; O Earth, with that odour, magnificence, brilliance, and splendour provide us so that no one may hate us.**25**.

शिला भूमिः अश्मा पांसुः सा भूमिः संधृता धृता ।
तस्यै हिरण्यवक्षसे पृथिव्यै अकरं नमः ।।२६।।

What is Earth? Rocks, stones, and dust! But that Earth is held together and her various components do not fall apart, as from rock to dust every particle is held together. Outside there are rocks and stones and dust, but inside

she holds mines of gold. I pay homage to such a wonderful Earth.**26**.

यस्यां वृक्षाः वानस्पत्याः ध्रुवाः तिष्ठन्ति विश्वहा ।
पृथिवीं विश्वधायसं धृताम् अच्छावदामसि ।।२७।।

The Earth on whom stand so much vegetation firmly rooted resulting in countless trees which by their number may even destroy everything in the world, yet this Earth holds all this without letting anything to be destroyed. To that all-supporting Earth we address praises.**27**.

उदीराणाः उत् आसीनाः तिष्ठन्तः प्रक्रामन्तः ।
पद्भ्यां दक्षिण सव्याभ्याम् मा व्यथिष्महि भूम्याम् ।।२८।।

We, while arising, sitting, standing, striding forth with vigour, with our right and left foot on Earth, may not be hurt nor stagger, O Earth.**28**.

विमृग्वरीम् पृथिवीं आ वदामि क्षमां भूमिं ब्रह्मणा वावृधानाम् ।
ऊर्जं पुष्टं बिभ्रतीम् अन्नभागं घृतं त्वा अभिनिषेदेम भूमे ।।२९।।

O Earth, I address thee, whose treasures are worth investigation; Whose virtue lies in forgiveness of her erring children; Who is always flourishing by the blessings of the Supreme Being; Who bearest brilliance, nourishment as everybody's share of food and fat. O Earth, we pray that we may stay on thee.**29**.

शुद्धाः नः आपः तन्वे क्षरन्तु, यः नः सेदुः अप्रिये तं निदध्मः ।
पवित्रेण पृथिवि मा उत् पुनामि ।।३०।।

Let pure waters flow for cleansing our body; whatever there is destructive in us we leave it to the one who loves not. With thee as purifier, O Earth, I purify myself.**30**.

The *Mantra* speaks of purity – physical and mental.

One purifies one's body with clean water; one's mind by letting the opposite party indulge in impure thoughts without oneself being affected by them. The devotee affirms that he will keep his body and mind clean and pure, and will let his opponents do what they like.

याः ते प्राचीः प्रादिशः, याः उदीचीः, याः ते भूमे अधराद् याः च पश्चात् । स्योनाः ताः मह्यं चरते भवन्तु, मा पप्तम् भुवने शिश्रियाणः ।।३१।।

O Earth, whatever thy front directions, whatever upward, whatever downward, whatever backward – all these directions may be pleasant to me while moving about. Let there be no fall of mine in this world having taken refuge in thee.**31**.

The devotee invokes the Earth that as he has taken shelter on her, he may be protected on all sides. Let there be no danger to his life, from the front, from the back, from above, and from down. He may feel safe in every direction.

मा नः पश्चात्, मा पुरस्तात् नुदिष्ठाः, मा उत्तरात् अधरात् उत। स्वस्ति भूमे नः भव, मा विदन् परिपन्थिनः वरीयः, यावय आ वधम् ।।३२।।

Let not our enemies attack us from behind, nor from the front, nor from above, nor from below; O Earth, be for our well-being; Let not our enemies get the better of us. Goad us on to their destruction.**32**.

यावत् ते अभि विपश्यामि भूमे सूर्येण मेदिना ।
तावत् मे चक्षुः मा मेष्ठ उत्तरं उत्तराम् समम् ।।३३।।

To whatever extent and howsoever long I see thee, O Earth, in conjunction with the sun, to that extent and so long may the sight of my eye not fail. Instead, from year to year, it may be better and better.**33**.

यत् शयानः पर्यावर्ते दक्षिणं सव्यं अभि भूमे पार्श्वम् ।
उत्तानाः त्वा प्रतीचीं यत् पृष्ठीभिः अधिशीमहे ।
मा हिंसीः तत्र नः भूमे सर्वस्य प्रतिशीवरि ।।३४।।

While sleeping I turn to the right or to the left side, face upwards or face on the back. O Earth, who helps everyone to lie in rest, destroy us not.**34**.

The devotee prays for an undisturbed sleep, unmolested by the enemies or by anyone else.

यत् ते भूमे विखनामि क्षिप्रं तत् अपि रोहतु ।
मा ते मर्म विमृग्वरि मा ते हृदयं अर्पिपम् ।।३५।।

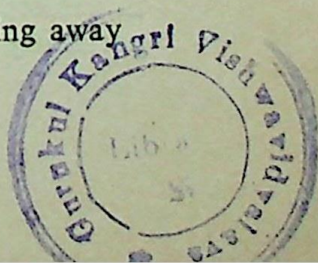
What of thee, O Earth, I dig (for sowing and cultivation) let that may grow very soon. Thou who art of the greatest speed. Whatever and whenever I dig of thee, it may not hurt thy vitals and thy heart.**35**.

Here the devotee turns into a poet. While ploughing the fields for cultivation he digs deep for plentiful harvest. But lest the Earth, while being dug deep, may feel hurt in her vitals and heart, he apologises and begs for forgiveness.

ग्रीष्मः ते भूमे वर्षाणि शरत् हेमन्तः शिशिरः वसन्तः ।
ऋतवः ते विहिताः हायनीः अहोरात्रे पृथिवि नः दुहताम् ।।३६।।

O Earth! six seasons have been formed for thee – the hot season, the rainy season, the autumn, the winter, the cold, and the spring season – these making one year. O Earth! yield unto us milk, day and night, during all these seasons.**36**.

या अप सर्पं विजमाना विमृग्वरी, यस्यां आसन् अग्नयः ये अप्सु अन्तः । परा दस्यून् ददती देवपीयून् इन्द्रं वृणाना पृथिवी न वृत्रम् । शक्राय दध्रे वृषभाय वृष्णे ।।३७।।

O Earth, of the greatest speed! thou art speeding away

from the serpent; thou in whom were the fires that are hidden into the waters; thou who art moving away from the God-defiling destructive forces; who art choosing the divine, not the evil; thou bearest the powerful and virile as one who possesses the strength of a bull.**37**.

Many things are attributed in this verse to the Earth. She possesses the greatest speed – this is one thing which is acknowledged by science. The second thing said is that the Earth is speeding away from the serpent. Serpent here stands for the serpentine movement. Serpentine movements are zig-zag, neither circular nor straight. The movement of the Earth is round the sun, it is circular. This is meant when the verse says that the Earth is moving away from the serpent. The third thing mentioned is that the Earth has waters in which fire is hidden. Waters contain fire hidden in them is proved by the fact that electricity is generated by hydro-electric plants. The fourth thing mentioned is that the Earth is worth living on when the destructive forces are eliminated and the divine overcomes the evil. The fifth thing mentioned is that the inhabitants of the Earth should be powerful, virile, and strong.

Serpent stands for crookedness, destruction, evil, and weakness. *Sarp* (सर्प), *Dasyu* (दस्यु), *Vritra* (वृत्र) – all represent the forces of evil; *Āpas* (आपस्), *Deva* (देव), *Indra* (इन्द्र), *Vrishabha* (वृषभ) represent the forces of goodness. The significance of the *Mantra* is that the forces of evil destroy the Earth, and the forces of goodness sustain her.

यस्यां सदः हविः धाने, यूपो यस्यां निमीयते, ब्रह्माणः यस्यां अर्चन्ति ऋग्भिः साम्ना यजुर्विदः । युज्यन्ते यस्यां ऋत्विजः सोमं इन्द्राय पातवे ॥३८॥

The Earth where people meet in assemblies, practise sacrificial acts, where there is abundance of food; where they plant their flagstaff of victory, where the learned knowing the ways of worship pray the divine with songs in verses; where the priests also join with others for partaking of *Soma* which has been prepared for the

victrious.**38.**

The verse describes the celebration of the victory in the conflict between the divine and the evil forces about which mention has been made in the previous verse.

यस्यां पूर्वे भूतकृतः ऋषयः गाः उत् आनृचुः ।
सप्त सत्रेण वेधसः यज्ञेन तपसा सह ।।३९।।

The Earth on whom the *Rishīs* (ऋषयः) speak and sing in verses the glorious deeds of the past of the forbears of the country; these learned ones do so by seven sittings coupled with sacrifice and penance.**39.**

The significance of the statement made in the verse is that we generally praise the heroic deeds of our ancestors and pay them only lip service. We do not follow their deeds in action. Here it is said that we should consider the importance of their deeds by seven sittings which means many times, and be willing to follow them even if we have to make sacrifices and have to undergo hardships.

सा नः भूमिः आ दिशतु यत् धनं कामयामहे ।
भगः अनुप्रयुङताम् इन्द्रः एतु पुरोगवः ।।४०।।

That Earth about whom so many attributes have been recounted orders for us the riches we desire. (This we claim on account of our effort.) Fortune may join this afterwards. Our effort be the fore-runner.**40.**

The verse lays emphasis on one's effort. After having made the effort it is expected that the Earth will command the fulfilment of our desires. Fortune may follow, not precede the effort is the essence of this *Mantra*.

VIII

Prithivi Sūkta – 3

पृथिवी सूक्त – ३

The Earth as Mother

Until now we have dealt with 40 *Mantrās* of the *Prithivī Sūkta*. Now we proceed with the next:

यस्यां गायन्ति नृत्यन्ति भूम्यां मर्त्याः व्यैलवाः। युध्यन्ते यस्यां आक्रन्दः यस्यां वदति दुन्दुभिः । सा नः भूमिः प्रणुदतां सपत्नान् असपत्नम् मा पृथिवी कृणोतु ।।४१।।

The Earth on whom the mortals speaking various tongues sing and dance; On whom they fight with drums resounding loud; Let that Earth drive out our rivals and make herself free from them.**41**.

Having made the Earth free from enemies and fit for habitation, the singer of the *Mantra* yearns for peaceful days in the following *Mantra*:

यस्यां अन्नं ब्रीहियवौ यस्याः इमाः पञ्च कृष्टयः । भूम्यै पर्जन्य पत्न्यै नमः अस्तु वर्षमेदसे ।।४२।।

Earth on whom grow foodgrains in the form of rice and barley; On whom are settled manifold groups of human beings; The Earth whose spouse is the cloud who fattens her with rain; To that Earth be my homage.**42**.

Here there is again a mention of five varieties of human beings – *Panch Krishtayah* (पञ्च कृष्टयः). In the 15th verse there is a mention of *Panch Mānvāh* (पञ्च मानवाः) – five

varieties of human beings. We have stated earlier that in the Vedic culture 'Five men' (*Panch Mānvāh* or *Panch Krishtayah* (पञ्च मानवाः or पंच कृष्टयः) represent a group of human beings, just as *Panchāyat* (पञ्चायत) means a representative body of a village. They may be five, or even more or less. Five (*Panch* – पंच) represents a group, not just the figure five.

यस्याः पुरः देवकृताः, क्षेत्रे यस्याः विकुर्वते । प्रजापतिः पृथिवीम् विश्वगर्भाम् आशां आशां रण्यां नः कृणोतु ॥४३॥

Whose cities are planned by men of sterling qualities; In whose fields and landscapes are conducted multifarious activities; Let the master of all beings make resplendent and pleasant to us the Earth who contains everything in her womb – the Earth in every direction.**43**.

निधिं विभ्रती बहुधा गुहा वसु मणिम् हिरण्यम् पृथिवी ददातु मे । वसूनि नः वसुदाः रासमाना देवी दधातु सुमनस्यमाना ॥४४॥

Let the Earth give me wealth, jewels, and gold which she bears in her hidden places in many forms. Let the Divine Earth, giver of wealth, pleased in mind, while bestowing treasures, sustain us.**44**.

जनं विभ्रती बहुधा विवाचसं नाना धर्माणं पृथिवी यथौकसम् । सहस्रं धारा द्रविणस्य मे दुहाम् ध्रुवा इव धेनुः अनपस्फुरन्ती॥४५॥

Let the Earth, bearing in various ways, people of different languages and of different customs particular to their locality, yield to me a thousand streams of wealth as the cow yielding milk standing steady and unresisting.**45**.

यः ते सर्पः वृश्चिकः तृष्टदंश्मा हेमन्तजब्धः भृमलः गुहाशये । क्रिमिः जिन्वत् पृथिवि यत् यत् एजति प्रावृषि तत् नः सर्पन् मा उप सृपत् । यत् शिवं तेन नः मृड ॥४६॥

O Earth! whatsoever harsh-biting, winter-smitten serpents and scorpians lie hidden to seek warmth in thee; whatsoever worm becomes lively and becomes active in rainy season; Let that serpent, scorpian, or worm, while creeping, not come near us; Whatsoever is good for us, with that be pleasant for us.**46**.

ये ते पन्थानः बहवः जनायना रथस्य वर्त्म अनसः च यातवे ।
यैः संचरन्ति उभये भद्रपापाः, तं पन्थानं जयेम, अनमित्रं,
अतस्करं यत् शिवं तेन नः मृड ।।४७।।

Whatsoever many paths thou hast for going about for people, for chariots and for carts; The paths by which men, both good and evil, travel; Let us conquer those paths making them free from enemies and marauders; Whatsoever is good for us, with that be pleasant for us.**47**.

मल्वं बिभ्रती गुरुभृद्, भद्रपापस्य निधनं तितिक्षुः
वराहेण पृथिवी संविदाना सूकराय वि जिहीते मृगाय ।।४८।।

O Earth! Thou upholdest the lightest and the heaviest; Thou endurest the extinction of the saint and the sinner; Thou in conjunction with the cloud makest room for the boar and the deer.**48**.

In this *Mantra* there is a mention of the Earth making room for the boar and the deer. The conjunction of the Earth with the cloud signifies plenty, for the Earth without the rains coming from the clouds would be a dry place uninhabitable by the boar and the deer. Both the boar and the deer represent the two kinds of animals – vegetarians and non-vegetarians. The quintessence of the *Mantra* is that the Earth sustains all – amongst the material things – light and heavy; amongst the non-material ones – men and animals; amongst the animals – vegetarians and non-vegetarians.

ये ते आरण्याः पशवः मृगाः वने हिताः सिंहाः व्याघ्राः पुरुषादः चरन्ति । उलं वृकं पृथिवि दुच्छुनाम् इतः ऋक्षीकाम् रक्षः अप बाधय अस्मत् ।।४९।।

Those forest-animals of thine, who go about settled in woods – deers, lions, and tigers, man-eaters; the jakal, the wolf, and the vilest bearess amongst the demons – do thou force them away from us, O Earth!**49**.

ये गन्धर्वाः अप्सरसः ये च अरायाः किमीदिनः ।
पिशाचान् सर्वा रक्षांसि तान् अस्मत् भूमे यावय ।।५०।।

O Earth! keep those away from us who are simply glib-talkers but not doers (*Gandharvāh* – गन्धर्वाः), those who make promises but run away in time of need (*Apsarasah* – अप्सरसः), those who cannot give or make sacrifice (*Ārāyāh* – आरायाः), those who regard everything insignificant (*Kim-īdinah* – किं ईदिनः), and those who inflict injuries on others (*Pishāchāh* – पिशाचाः) – keep away all these Demons.**50**.

In this *Mantra* we have translated *Gandharvāh* as glib-talkers from 'गां धारयन्ति इति गन्धर्वाः'– those who are masters of tongue only; *Apsarasah* as promise-breakers from 'अप् सृ सूरणे' – those who go back; *Ārāyāh* as reluctant to sacrifice from 'अ' (not), and 'रा दाने' (to give) – no-givers, and *Kim-īdinah* as those who treat everything insignificant from 'किम्' (what) and 'इदम्' (is this) – of what significance is this! The *Mantra* says that through the blessings of the Mother Earth we may keep away from those who simply talk high but never act, who always make promises but never fulfil them, who sit tight over their wealth but never part with it for the betterment of society, who treat everything, however important, as trite and insignificant and who like Demons inflict injuries on others.

यां द्विपादः पक्षिणः संपतन्ति हंसाः सुपर्णाः शकुना वयांसि ।
यस्यां वातः मातरिश्वा ईयते रजांसि कृण्वन् च्यावयन् च वृक्षान् ।
वातस्य प्रवाम् उपवाम् अनु वाति अर्चिः ।।५१।।

The Earth, in whom two-footed winged ones – swans, eagles, hawks, and birds – fly together; In whom wind moving in the sky raises clouds of dust and sets the trees in

motion; In whom there are currents of wind followed by their sub-currents; In whom there is light spread all over.**51**.

यस्यां कृष्णं अरुणं च संहिते अहोरात्रे विहिते भूम्यां अधि । वर्षेण भूमिः पृथिवी वृता आवृता सा नः दधातु भद्रया प्रिये धामनि धामनि ॥५२॥

The Earth on whom dark and brilliant have been joined together in the form of day and night; the broad earth who is wrapped and covered all around with rain-water; Let that Earth, with her nobility, sustain us from place to place.**52**.

द्यौः च इदं पृथिवी च अन्तरिक्षं च मे व्यचः ।
अग्निः सूर्यः आपः मेधां विश्वे देवाः च सं ददुः ॥५३॥

The Heaven and the Earth, and also the atmosphere spread out in between, surrounding me; Fire, Sun, Waters, and all the Divine Forces – all these together have given me wisdom.**53**.

Having fortified himself with invocations of blessings from the Mother Earth, the recitor of the *Mantrās* raises himself to the pedestal of a conqueror of the Earth and a man of achievements and success. Placing himself in such a position he proclaims:

अहम् अस्मि सहमानः उत्तरः नाम भूम्याम् ।
अभीषाट् अस्मि विश्वाषाट् आशां आशां विषासहिः ॥५४॥

I am one who can face all onslaughts, am known as superior by name on the Earth, I am conqueror, conqueror of the world. I conquer the Earth from every direction.**54**.

अदः यत् देवि प्रथमाना पुरस्तात् देवैः उक्ता व्यसर्पः महित्वम् ।
आ त्वा सुभूतम् अविशत् तदानीम् अकल्पयथाः प्रदिशः चतस्रः ॥५५॥

O Divine Earth! thou art spread out onwards in front

(of me); the greatness of thine spreading out has been proclaimed by men who shine; and then, (after my having conquered every bit of the Earth) well-being entered into thee (that is, first having conquered I took to the welfare of people). Thou givest the form to the four quarters (before which the whole land was just an expanse of space with no landmarks in any direction).**55**.

In the 54th *Mantra* the recitor assumes the role of a conqueror of the Earth. In his onward march he finds the Earth spread out inviting him for victories to the unknown regions. Wherever he goes great are his achievements. And when he establishes himself and settles down, welfare of all his subjects in all the four directions of the Earth is the goal of his government.

And what transformation takes place in the regions he has established himself in?

ये ग्रामाः यत् अरण्यं याः सभाः अधि भूम्याम् ।
ये संग्रामाः समितयः तेषु चारु वदेम ते ।।५६।।

Whatsoever are the villages, whatsoever the forests, whatsoever the assemblies on the Earth; whatsoever the associations and the gatherings – in them may we speak good of thee, O Earth!**56**.

अश्वः इव रजः दुधुवे वि तान् जनान् ये आक्षियन् पृथिवीं यात् अजायत । मन्द्रा, अग्रेत्वरी, भुवनस्य गोपा, वनस्पतीनाम् गृभिः ओषधीनाम् ।।५७।।

As a horse shakes off the dust (of his body), so does the conqueror shake off those men who destroy the Earth. This has happened since (the Earth) was born. The Earth who is pleasing, moving with speed, protector of creation, container or holder of trees and herbs.**57**.

The enemies and the traitors of the Motherland being purged off like the warrior-horse shaking off the dust from his body is a very significant and impressive simile. The attributes of the Motherland being pleasant and sweet,

offering safety and protection, being in constant speed and moving on towards progress and expanding, covered all over with trees, flowering plants, and curative herbs – are all one could wish for, for one's Motherland.

यत् वदामि मधुमत् तत् वदामि, यत् ईक्षे तत् वनन्ति मा ।
त्विषीमान् अस्मि जूतिमान् अव अन्यान् हन्मि दोधतः ।।५८।।

Whatever I speak, I speak that with the sweetness of honey; Whatever I see inspires in me devotion; Brilliant am I, man of swift action am I, I smite down those who are committed to violence (are violent).**58**.

शान्तिवा सुरभिः स्योना कीलालोध्नी पयस्वती ।
भूमिः अधि ब्रवीतु मे पृथिवी पयसा सह ।।५९।।

Tranquil, fragrant, pleasant, with playful udders, full of milk, let the Earth (like the cow) call unto me overflowing with milk (as the cow calls to her calf).**59**.

याम् अन्वैच्छत् हविषा विश्वकर्मा अन्तः अर्णवे रजसि प्रविष्टाम् ।
भुजिष्यं पात्रं निहितं गुहा यत् आविः भोगे अभवत् मातृमद्भ्यः ।।६०।।

(Motherland) whom the man of action (*Vishvakarmā* – विश्वकर्मा) after having gone through sacrifices, sought out, lying in water and dust; In which was deposited enjoyment and safety in secret; All that (secret) became manifest for (one) whom the Earth became a Mother.**60**.

The *Mantra* says that the Earth, after all, is nothing but water and dust. But when one treats her as one's Mother, all the secrets of enjoyment and safety lying hidden inside her become manifest. The Earth becomes one's Mother and one her Son.

त्वं असि आवपनी जनानाम्, अदितिः कामदुघा, पप्रथाना ।
यत् ते ऊनम् तत् ते आ पूरयाति प्रजापतिः, प्रथमजा ऋतस्य ।।६१।।

Thou art agro-productive for the people; thou art indes-

tructible; wish-fulfilling; spreading out. Whatever there is deficient in thee that is made good by the progenitor of all that is born; (the progenitor of all) is the one who is the first-born of the Divine Law.**61**.

The *Mantra* says that the Earth though cut by furrows in the soil remains indestructible; not only that, instead of being shortened by cutting by furrows she spreads far and wide. She fulfils the wish of the devotee and whatever remains unfulfilled is made good by the progenitor of the world. The progenitor of the world is called here the first-born which means that there was nothing born before He was. 'Born' here means that He as the Divine Law – *Rita* (ऋत) – first manifested Himself in setting the world into activity. Manifestation of the Divine Law is His being 'Born'.

उपस्थाः ते अनमीवाः अयक्ष्माः अस्मभ्यं सन्तु पृथिवि प्रसूताः ।
दीर्घं नः आयु प्रतिबुध्यमानाः वयं तुभ्यं बलिहृतः स्याम ।।६२।।

O Earth! All who are born out of thee and are in thy lap are one of us; Let them be without any disease, ordinary or chronic. Let us intelligently awaken to a long life, and may we be the tribute-bearers to thee.**62**.

भूमे मातः नि धेहि मा भद्रया सुप्रतिष्ठितम् ।
संविदाना दिवा कवे श्रियां मा धेहि भूत्याम् ।।६३।।

O Mother Earth! do thou set me down for my welfare well established; O far-seer, set me down in fortune and prosperity consistent with Divine Virtues.**63**.

The *Mantra* lays emphasis on fortune and prosperity based on virtue for it is possible to be fortunate and prosperous in the worldly sense without virtue. The *Mantra* makes virtue as an indispensable adjunct of fortune and prosperity.

EPILOGUE

The description of Mother Earth in the *Prithivī Sūkta* of

the *Atharva Veda* does not restrict itself to this or that particular land, it is applicable to every land, of all climes and times, where men settle down and regard the land of their habitation as their Motherland. One of the *Mantrās* has rightly said, what after all is the land of one's adoption? It is nothing but mud and water – 'अन्त: अर्णवे रजांसि' (**60**) – but the emotional attachment of men who settle thereon makes them call it their Mother. In fact, the *Prithivī Sūkta* is addressed to those who are emotionally attached to their country as a Son is attached to his Mother – 'मातृमद्भ्य:' (**60**). This attachment to the land of one's birth is so deep and penetrating that the devotee in the *Prithivī Sūkta* addresses her as his Mother and styles himself as her Son– 'माता भूमि: पुत्रोहम् पृथिव्या: (**12**). This relationship is so close that treating oneself as the Child of the Earth one prays that the Earth may yield milk to him as a Mother does to her Babe – 'माता पुत्राय मे पय:' (**10**). For one who is in consonance with the land of his birth, his Motherland is like a living organism possessing an immortal heart reverberating with kindness and love resting in the highest firmament – 'यस्या: हृदयम् परमे व्योमन्' (**8**). One shudders to hurt her heart – 'मा ते हृदयम् ग्रर्पिपम्' (**35**).

The poet in the *Mantrās* of this *Sūkta* visualizes the Mother Earth as radiating with a golden aura – 'हिरण्यस्येव संदृशि.' (**18**); resplendent and pleasing – 'रण्यम्' (**43**); even the fragrance of the Motherland emanating from flowers grown all over is enchanting – 'य: ते गंध: पुष्करं आविवेश'(**24**).

One admires the animals – tame and wild – roaming about in the forests – 'आरण्या: पशव: मृगा: वने हिता: हिंसा: व्याघ्रा'(**49**) – reminding us of modern sanctuaries of animals. It is a place where useful animals as cows, horses, and birds are protected and looked after—'गवां अश्वानाम् वयसश्च विष्ठा' (**5**).

The Motherland is a country where people from all over the world are welcome – 'जगत: निवेशनी' (**6**); even every description of race finds a place here – 'वैश्वानरं विभ्रति' (**6**); so much so that people of different tongues and religions have an equal right – 'जनं विभ्रती बहुधा विवाचसं' – 'नाना धर्माणं' – as citizens of the Motherland (**45**).

The poet of the *Veda* looks to the hills and dales and

mountains covered with snow - 'गिरयः ते पर्वताः हिमवन्तः' (**11**) - with pleasure and takes pride in the crystal-clear water of the rivers and the water-falls - 'शुद्धा न आपः क्षरन्तु' (**30**).

The foundations of the Motherland are laid on unshakable spiritual rocks - 'पृथिवीं' धर्मणा धृताम्' (**17**), selflessness and sacrifice being the essence of individual and social life - 'यस्यां यज्ञं तन्वते' (**13**), with the background of progressive realisation of Godhead - 'ब्रह्मणा वावृधानाम्' (**29**).

The State - the Motherland - is committed to the Truth which by its very nature is great, to Righteousness which by its very nature is irresistable, to Devotion, Hard work, and Labour (**1**).

To such an Earth - our Motherland - we pay Homage - 'तस्यै नमः' (**26**).

IX

Brahmacharya Sūkta

ब्रह्मचर्य सूक्त

Life of Physical, Intellectual, and Moral Development

This is the 11th *Kānda* and the 5th *Sūkta* of the *Atharva Veda*. It is called the *Brahmacharya Sūkta* – ब्रह्मचर्य सूक्त. *Brahmacharya* (ब्रह्मचर्य) is the original and unique conception of the Vedic culture. The concept of *Brahmacharya* (ब्रह्मचर्य) has three meanings – one: in a wider sense, a person moves from a smaller to a bigger dimension – *Brahma* – ब्रह्म – in life; the second: in a stricter sense, a person restrains his senses, particularly has control over his sex-life; and the third: as a student he strives to live a simple life of hardship avoiding all luxuries and facing every physical discomfort such as heat, cold, and pain with equanimity. His main forte is endurance – *Tap* – तप. The *Brahmachārī* – ब्रह्मचारी – is one who works for the fulfilment of the above three aims of life simultaneously. Thus extol the first two stanzas of the *Veda* – a life of endurance – तप – which is the basic principle of *Brahmacharya*.

**ब्रह्मचारी इष्णन् चरति रोदसी उभे, तस्मिन् देवाः संमनसः भवन्ति ।
सः दाधार पृथिवीं दिवं च, सः आचार्यं तपसा पिपर्ति ।।१।।**

Wishing to investigate – इष्णन् – (the secrets of) both the worlds – the earth and the heaven – रोदसी उभे, the *Brahmachārī* embarks upon the journey of life – चरति. In that task, the men of divine qualities – देवाः – his teachers – are of similar frame of mind. The ***Brahmachārī*** holds

on – दाधार – to the investigation (of the secrets) of the earth and the heaven. In the investigation, the *Brahmachārī* satisfies his teacher – आचार्य – with his endurance and hard application.**1**.

Here the aim and the object of education of a student are clarified. He is to be in search of anything and every thing that is to be sought on the earth and in the heaven. There is no limit to his quest. His teachers are also of the same frame of mind – देवा: संमनस: भवन्ति – they are out to help him. They, as if, hold the earth and the heaven together in their hands for investigation. The student works so hard and with such endurance that his teacher – आचार्य: – is all but praise for him and is fully satisfied.

In the next *Mantra* it is said that not only his teacher but all who are in any way helpful to him are satisfied with him:

ब्रह्मचारिणं पितरः देवगणाः पृथक् देवाः अनुसंयन्ति सर्वे ।
गन्धर्वाः एनम् अनु आयन्, त्रयः त्रिंशत्, त्रिशताः, षट् सहस्राः,
सर्वान् सः देवान् तपसा पिपर्ति ॥२॥

To such a student, who is praised by his Teacher – आचार्य – all others – such as the Elders – पितर:, Men of Divine Qualities – देवा:, the men of Arts – गंधर्वा, who may be thirty, three hundred, or six thousand (which means any number) offer praise, and he satisfies them all with his endurance and application.**2**.

आचार्यः उपनयमानः ब्रह्मचारिणम् कृणुते गर्भं अन्तः । तं रात्रीः
तिस्रः उदरे बिभर्ति, तं जातं द्रष्टुं अभिसंयन्ति देवा ॥३॥

The teacher – आचार्य: – of such a student – ब्रह्मचारी – brings him close to himself, so close as the infant is in the womb of its mother. It is so, as if, the teacher as the mother conceived the child in himself and kept him inside for three nights. When after completing his education he issues forth into the world, it is, as if, he were born. The men of Divine qualities – देवा: – converge from all sides to help him see the light of day.**3**.

In no educational system of the world has the closest relationship between the teacher and the taught been expressed with such a telling effect as it is done in this *Mantra*. The teacher conceives the student within himself as the mother does her child. Could the intimate relationship between the teacher and the taught be expressed in a more effective way? The teacher takes upon himself the responsibility not only of the father but also of the mother.

What is the meaning of three nights during which the teacher keeps the student within himself? The three nights are the physical (*Ādhibhautik* – आधिभौतिक), the psychological (*Ādhidaivik* – आधिदैविक), and the spiritual (*Ādhyātmik* – आध्यात्मिक) ignorance. The student is instructed to keep his body strong, his mind sharp, and his soul vigilant and awake. This is growing from three nights which is possible only by staying with the teacher in intimate association.

When the student – *Brahmachārī* – imbibes all what the teacher – (*Āchārya* – आचार्य) – has to instruct, then he is received as an asset by the society.

इयं समित् पृथिवी, द्यौः द्वितीया, उत अन्तरिक्षं समिधा पृणाति ।
ब्रह्मचारी समिधा मेखलया श्रमेण लोकान् तपसा पिपर्ति ॥४॥

This Earth is one stick of fuel – समिधा, the heaven is the second, and the space between these two is the third stick of fuel – समिधा. With these three sticks of fuel, the *Agnihotra* (*Yajñya* – यज्ञ) – in the universe is complete. The *Brahmachārī* with girdle round his waist – मेखलया, with his effort – श्रमेण, and with endurance – तपसा – as fuels – समित् – with these three he performs the *Agnihotra* – (*Yajñya* – यज्ञ).**4**.

Two Vedic ideas are adumberated in this *Mantra*. One: The Vedic conception is that the macrocosm is correlated with the microcosm. The human body is the miniature universe. Whatever is happening in the universe is also happening in a small scale in the body. What is happening in the universe? The universe is a great *Yajñya* – यज्ञ – in which the Earth – पृथिवी, the Heaven – द्युः,

and the Space in between – अन्तरिक्ष – are being offered as fuel-sticks – समित्. This *Yajñya* is a stupendous activity of the creator with which the aim and the object of creation come to completion – पृणाति. This is the *Yajñya* in macrocosm. Against this, in microcosm, the *Brahmachārī* also performs *Yajñya* in which the girdle – मेखला, the effort – श्रम, and the endurance – तप, are offered as the fuel-sticks – समिधा, with which the aim and the object of life come to completion. Second: continuous effort – श्रम, and endurance – तप, are the foundation-stones of the successful completion of an activity that brings about success and satisfaction – पृणाति, पिपर्ति.

पूर्वः जातः ब्रह्मणः ब्रह्मचारी, घर्मं वसानः, तपसा उत् अतिष्ठत् ।
तस्मात् जातं ब्राह्मणं ब्रह्म ज्येष्ठं, देवाः च सर्वे अमृतेन साकम् ।।५।।

One should be a *Brahmachārī* before one is fit to be born into knowledge. There should be an intense heat in him for the acquisition of knowledge, which means a strong desire for knowledge. By means of such an enduring, hard – तपसा – and strong desire he rises to the top of the ladder of life. From this process is manifested in him the highest knowledge – ब्रह्म ज्येष्ठम, pertaining to the divine – ब्राह्मणम्. Thus, all divine people are in contact with immortality.5.

The *Mantra* describes the process to attain immortality. The important step is to be a *Brahmachārī* – which means: (a) determination to move from a smaller to a bigger dimension in life; (b) to control his senses, particularly his sex-life; and (c) to live a simple life of hardship and endurance. With *Tap* – तप – hard labour – (physical, mental, and spiritual) – he moves up the scale of life and attains the highest knowledge which leads him to immortality.

ब्रह्मचारी एति समिधा समिद्धः, कार्ष्णं वसानः, दीक्षितः, दीर्घश्मश्रुः।
सः सद्यः एति पूर्वस्मात् उत्तरं समुद्रं, लोकान् संगृभ्य मुहुः आचरिक्रत् ।।६।।

Lo and behold! the *Brahmachārī* comes (after completing his education) face as bright and resplendent – समिद्धः –

as the fire of the fuel. He is putting the dark deer skin on his body, with long moustache and beard. Collecting people – संगृभ्य, again and again – मुहुः, and edifying them with his ennobling sermons – आचरिक्रत्, he moves swiftly – सद्यः, from the Eastern to the Western ocean.**6**.

As the *Brahmachārī* is required to live a simple and hard life, after completing his education also he is expected to be as simple as possible. To say that he comes from the *Āshram* of the *Āchārya* with a deer skin on, and unshaven, is to emphasise the simple and hard life he has been leading. And what does he do after the termination of his educational career? He moves about addressing the gatherings of people, spreading the message of cultural heritage he has received at the hands of his *Āchārya*. His movements are swift and his message is carried all over which is signified by saying that he moves from the Eastern to the Western ocean.

ब्रह्मचारी जनयन् ब्रह्म, अपः लोकं, प्रजापतिं, परमेष्ठिनम् विराजम् ।
गर्भः भूत्वा अमृतस्य योनौ, इन्द्रः ह भूत्वा असुरान् ततर्ह ।।७।।

The *Brahmachārī* at his initiation is conceived in the womb of immortality – अमृतस्य योनौ – as his Mother. After maturation he comes out as *Indra* – इन्द्रः, an individual of immeasurable power and strength. As such, he generates the climate of the country full of divine knowledge – *Brahma* (ब्रह्म), good actions – *Apah* (अपः), Intelligent and Appreciative people – *Lokam* (लोकम्), Good government – *Prajāpatim* (प्रजापतिं), and the understanding of one who is above all – *Parmeshtinam* (परमेष्टिनं) – God. Thus, becoming *Indra* he destroys – *Tatarh* (ततर्ह) – all the evil forces in the society – *Asurān* (असुरान्).7.

The *Mantra* details the programme the *Brahmachārī*, after receiving education at the *Āshram* of his *Āchārya*, has to carry out. He has to destroy the evil forces working in the society and initiate and further the movements for the uplift of the social structure. He disseminates spiritual knowledge, encourages people to associate themselves with good and noble activities, form healthy associations,

take part in the government of the country, and, above all, to follow the dictates of the Lord of the Universe – God.

आचार्यः ततक्ष नभसी उभे इमे, उर्वी गम्भीरे पृथिवी दिवं च ।
ते रक्षति तपसा ब्रह्मचारी, तस्मिन् देवाः संमनसः भवन्ति ॥८॥

The *Achārya* has scraped to formation – *Tataksha* (ततक्ष), both the worlds – *Nabhasī ubhe* (नभसी उभे); the wide – *Urvī* (उर्वी) and deep – *Gambhire* (गम्भीरे), the Earth and the Heaven – *Prithivī Divam Cha* (पृथवी दिवं च). By his enduring effort – *Tapasā* (तपसा) the *Brahmachārī* preserves them. The men of divine qualities are of the same mind – संमनसः – as of the *Brahmachārī*.8.

How could the *Āchārya* scrape down the Heaven and the Earth and give them a form, as if, from a rugged material? The *Mantra* does not mean it that way. In the first stanza there is a mention that the *Brahmachārī* with the help of the *Āchārya* – his teacher – has launched upon the investigation of both the worlds – the heaven and the earth. Here scraping both the worlds means investigation of the Heaven and the Earth, going into all what they contain and have to offer by way of knowledge. In this investigation along with the *Āchārya* other men of learning lend a helping hand and are of one mind – संमनसः. They contribute to the preservation of knowledge – रक्षति – by the hard endurance and serious application – तपसा – of the *Brahmachārī*.

इमां भूमिं पृथिवीं ब्रह्मचारी भिक्षां आजभार प्रथमः दिवं च ।
ते कृत्वा समिधौ उप आस्ते, तयोः अर्पिताः भुवनानि विश्वा ॥९॥

First of all – प्रथमः – the *Brahmachārī* obtained – आजभार – this vast Earth and the Heaven as a charitable donation – भिक्षा. Then, he made of them oblations for offering worship (to God). In these two are included all the worlds.9.

During his investigation, the *Brahmachārī* obtains all the knowledge from his teachers concerning every thing contained in the heaven and the earth. This knowledge he obtains as a gift or donation – भिक्षा – from his teachers,

for in the Vedic culture knowledge is imparted free to one and all. After obtaining knowledge in this way, the *Brahmachārī* also imparts it free, makes this knowledge of the heaven and the earth as two burning fuels to give light to the world.

अर्वाक् अन्यः, परा अन्यः, दिवः पृष्ठात् गुहा निधी निहितौ ब्राह्मणस्य । तौ रक्षति तपसा ब्रह्मचारी, तत् केवलं कृणुते ब्रह्म विद्वान् ॥१०॥

At the point where the heaven ends – दिवः पृष्ठात्, there are two worlds: one of them down below – अर्वाक् अन्यः, and the other above – परा अन्यः. Both of them are treasures – गुहा निधी, placed in the hidden cave (of the heart) of the *Brahmachārī*. He keeps them safe and protects them by his efforts. The one who knows *Brahma* makes this the only – केवलम् – object of his life.**10**.

In this *Mantra* there is a mention of two worlds which the *Brahmachārī* explores to widen his knowledge. One of them is down below. That is the earth. And the other is above, at the point where the heaven starts. This is the heaven. The knowledge contained in both of them is a sort of treasure – निधि. The *Brahmachārī* preserves both the treasures with his effort. The *Brahmachārī* makes both the worlds – the heaven and the earth – as one unit for investigation, and protects them both with his *Tapas* – तपसा रक्षति. The idea put forth is that both the heaven and the earth contain treasures of knowledge which the *Brahmachārī* must explore, and make this effort as the ambition of his life – केवलम्.

अर्वाक् अन्यः इतः, अन्यः पृथिव्याः, अग्नी समेतः नभसी अन्तरा इमे । तयोः श्रयन्ते रश्मयः अधि दृढाः, तान् आतिष्ठति तपसा ब्रह्मचारी ॥११॥

Different from the near one, different from what is on the earth, there are two fires – अग्नी, which meet together – समेतः, in the space between the heaven and the earth. Their rays firmly meet together. The *Brahmachārī* with his

Tapas – तपस्, a life of hardness and endurance, outshines – अति तिष्टति – both of them.**11**.

The *Mantra* says that on the earth we have fire, but in the space between the heaven and the earth there are two other fires – the fire of the sun and the fire of the moon. When the rays of the sun and of the moon meet, they create a combination of splendour. The *Mantra* says that, in comparison, the face of the *Brahmachārī* outshines the brightness of the combination of the two sets of rays. Such is the infinite energy – *Tej* – तेज – imparted by the utilisation and absorption within oneself of the sex-energy that the *Brahmachārī*'s face shines with so much brilliance that it outshines the brilliance of the sun and the moon put together. This hyperbolic statement is to emphasise the importance of *Brahmacharya*.

अभिक्रन्दन् स्तनयन् वरुणः शितिंगः बृहत् शेपः अनु भूमौ जभार । ब्रह्मचारी सिञ्चति सानौ रेतः पृथिव्यां तेन जीवन्ति प्रदिशः चतस्रः ॥१२॥

As a cloud of red and dark hues making loud thunders, having productive power, nourishes the earth, the mountains, and the four quarters of the earth with showers of rain and they get life, so does the *Brahmachārī* with thundering voice, glowing face, virile, replenishes the earth and the mountains and the four quarters of the earth with the eternal waters of the divine message.**12**.

In this *Mantra*, the *Brahmachārī* is compared with the dark and red cloud which thunders and brings rain to the earth, the mountains, and the four quarters of the earth so that there be plenty of food for people to eat. The *Brahmachārī* should likewise spread throughout the world the revitalising spiritual message for the benefit of mankind. The physical life is maintained by the rain-water from the clouds, the spiritual life is maintained by the showers of the spiritual message from the *Brahmachārī*.

अग्नौ सूर्ये चन्द्रमसि मातरिश्वन् ब्रह्मचारी अप्सु समिधं आदधाति । तासां अर्चींषि पृथक् अभ्रे चरन्ति तासां आज्यं पुरुषः वर्षं आपः ॥१३॥

The *Brahmachārī* (while performing *Agnihotra*) places *Samidhā* (समिधा) – the burning fuel – in the Fire, in the Sun, in the Moon, in the Wind, in the Waters. Their rays – separately – move to the cloud. Out of them is formed the *Purush* – पुरुषः, the rain – वर्षम्, and the water – आपः.**13**.

This *Mantra* speaks of the process how the *Agnihotra* helps cause the rain. The process implied is as follows : First, the *Samidhā* – समिधा, i.e., the material – सामग्री – with which the *Agnihotra* is performed (not only the fuel-sticks but all the materials that are used in performing the *Havan*) is placed in the fire. After burning, the etherial fumes of the material – *Sāmagrī* – go to the various elements in the world – the sun, the moon, the wind, the waters. All of them for their part remit the essence of the substances received by them from the flaming material to the clouds – अभ्रे चरन्ति. After that the rain-water – वर्षं आपः – falls to the ground and the man is benefited by way of higher and better production.

आचार्यः मृत्युः, वरुणः, सोमः, ओषधयः, पयः ।
जीमूताः आसन् सत्वानः, तैः इदं स्वः आभृतम् ।।१४।।

The *Āchārya* is like the death, like the water, like the moon, like the medicine, like the milk, like the cloud. With these this pleasant world is full to the brim – आभृतम्.**14**.

The *Āchārya* is like the death because he has to make the student die for his old prejudices and conditionings so that he may receive new light from his teacher; he is like the water because he cleanses the impurities of the body and of the mind of the student; he is like the moon because he gladdens the heart; he is like the medicine because he cures the ills; he is like the milk because he gives the spiritual nourishment; he is like the cloud because he showers the rain of his knowledge all over the world. With these noble qualities of the *Āchārya* the world of happiness is full to the brim. Earlier, the *Mantra* dilates on the qualities of the *Brahmachārī*; now it speaks of the qualities of the *Āchārya* – the teacher.

अमा घृतं कृणुते आचार्यः भूत्वा वरुणः यत् यत् ऐच्छत् प्रजापतौ ।
तत् ब्रह्मचारी प्रायच्छत् स्वान् मित्रः अधि आत्मनः ॥१५॥

It is only the *Āchārya* who makes the home turn into *Ghee*, i.e., a place of nourishment, development, and plenty. When he becomes the *Varuṇ* – वरुण: – i.e., one to be sought after, then whatever the *Āchārya* wants for the progress and the protection of the people – प्रजापतौ – the *Brahmachārī* procures all that for him, as well as for those who are his friends and his own by relationship.**15**.

आचार्यः ब्रह्मचारी, ब्रह्मचारी प्रजापतिः ।
प्रजापतिः वि राजति, विराट् इन्द्रः अभवत् वशी ॥१६॥

The *Āchārya* – the teacher – should be a *Brahamchārī*; the *Prajāpati* – the ruler – should be a *Brahmachārī*; thus the ruler shines; and one who shines is *Indra* – a person of supreme power, but one who possesses supreme power can be only he who has control over himself – वशी.**16**.

Here the emphasis is on *Brahmacharya*. The teacher should be a *Brahmachārī*. He should be one who is determined to move in life from smallness to greatness, who restrains his senses, particularly has control over his sex-life, and who tries to live a life of simplicity, hardness, and endurance. He alone who himself lives a life of *Brahmacharya* can inspire his students to live that life. Not only the *Āchārya* but the ruler – प्रजापति: – too should be a *Brahmachārī*. Thus, one who observes the life of self-control can be in the position of adviser to others to control themselves. Example is better than precept.

ब्रह्मचर्येण तपसा राजा राष्ट्रं वि रक्षति ।
आचार्यः ब्रह्मचर्येण ब्रह्मचारिणं इच्छते ॥१७॥

By the hard life of endurance and self-control, i.e. the life of *Brahmacharya* only, the ruler can protect the state; the *Āchārya* – the teacher – also can aspire to have the respect of his students by the observance of *Brahmacharya*.**17**.

There is the continued emphasis on *Brahmacharya*, i.e., self-control. No ruler who has no control over his passions, who indulges in sex-life, who is given to the life of senses and luxury, can be a successful ruler. Similarly, no teacher who is not a *Brahmachārī* can be a guide to his students. According to the Vedic culture, *Brahmacharya* is the key to successful material as well as spiritual life.

ब्रह्मचर्येण कन्या युवानं विन्दते पतिम् ।
अनड्वान् ब्रह्मचर्येण अश्वः घासं जिगीर्षति ।।१८।।

It is after the life of *Brahmacharya* that the girl gets a young man as her husband. It is due to *Brahmacharya* that the bull and the horse, even though subsisting on grass, have the strength to aspire to be victorious (in a fight).**18.**

ब्रह्मचर्येण तपसा देवाः मृत्युं अपाघ्नत ।
इन्द्रः ह ब्रह्मचर्येण देवेभ्यः स्वः आभरत ।।१९।।

By the enduring power of *Brahmacharya*, the divine men destroyed death. *Indra* – the most powerful of the divine persons – filled the divine people with happiness by the observance and power of *Brahmacharya*.**19.**

By destroying death, the *Mantra* does not mean that death does not take place at all. When with the observance of *Brahmacharya* one gets over the fear of death for that one death ceases. *Brahmacharya* is the realisation of one's victory over the passions of flesh. This realisation fills one with supreme happiness which is bound to happen to every one who scores victory over any situation. This the *Mantra* calls the death of death.

ओषधयः भूतभव्यम्, अहोरात्रे, वनस्पतिः ।
संवत्सरः सह ऋतुभिः ते जाताः ब्रह्मचारिणः ।।२०।।

Medicines, past and future, day and night, plants and trees, years and seasons – all become of the *Brahmachārī*.**20.**

This is a poetic expression. The *Brahmachārī* is so much loved and respected and is in tune with the nature and the world around that every thing becomes his. 'His' means the expanse of his Self. Or, they become his associates. The medicines, past and future, day and night, plants and trees, years and seasons – all become his friends.

पार्थिवाः दिव्याः पशवः आरण्याः ग्राम्याः च ये ।
अपक्षाः पक्षिणः च ये, ते जाताः ब्रह्मचारिणः ।।२१।।

All that is on the earth and in the heaven; the animals of forests and the domesticated ones in villages; and also the birds with as well as without wings – all become of the *Brahmachārī*.**21**.

Here also the poetic idea is in evidence. All is his – in the heaven or on the earth – all living creatures – men, animals, birds – become his. He is the master of all that he surveys. Such is the significance and the greatness of the observance of *Brahmacharya* – which means purity of character – that he is in all and all are in him.

Most translators have rendered the stanza meaning that medicines, past and future, day and night, etc. and also animals and birds, etc., become *Brahmachārī*'s. But if the word *Brahmachārī* is interpreted in genetive singular, then our translation gives a better sense.

पृथक् सर्वे प्राजापत्याः प्राणान् आत्मसु बिभ्रति ।
तान् सर्वान् ब्रह्म रक्षति ब्रह्मचारिणि आभृतम् ।।२२।।

All creatures individually and separately – पृथक् – created have their breaths placed in their souls. God protects them all by reposing them all – आभृतम् – in (the hands of) the *Brahmachārī*.**22**.

It means that the source of life of all living creatures is the breath – प्राण – but the breath is reposed in the soul – आत्मा. If there is no soul, there is no breath, no life. God protects all living souls – all living creatures – but protection rests in one's observance of *Brahmacharya* – purity of sex-life and high character.

देवानाम् एतत् परिषूतम् अनभ्यारूढम् चरति रोचमानम् ।
तस्मात् जातं ब्राह्मणं ब्रह्म ज्येष्ठं देवाः च सर्वे अमृतेन साकम् ।।२३।।

The *Brahmachārī* is a quintessence – परिषूतम् – of divine qualities. He is unconquerable – अनभ्यारूढम् – no body can ride him. Thus, bright and shining, he moves about. From him is born the highest knowledge – ब्रह्म ज्येष्ठम् – pertaining to divinity – ब्राह्मणम्. Thus, through him, all divine people are in contact with Immortality.**23**. (The second part of this verse is the same as the second part of the 5th verse of the *Sūkta*.)

ब्रह्मचारी ब्रह्म भ्राजत् बिभर्ति, तस्मिन् देवाः अधि विश्वे समोताः ।
प्राणापानौ जनयन् आत् व्यानं वाचं मनः हृदयं ब्रह्म मेधाम् ।।२४।।
चक्षुः श्रोत्रम् यशः अस्मासु धेहि अन्नं रेतः लोहितम् उदरम् ।।२५।।

The *Brahmachārī*, shining and bright, holds in him the divine knowledge – ब्रह्म. Hence, all the divine qualities concentrate – अधि समोताः – in him. Let him generate – जनयन् – in us the force of *Prān*, *Apān*, and *Vyān* – प्राण, अपान, and व्यान. **24**. Let our speech, mind, heart, knowledge, intellect, sight, hearing, food, virility, blood, digestion be regenerated by the observance and practice of *Brahmacharya*.**25**.

By *Prān* – प्राण – is meant the enabolic process, by *Apān* – अपान – is meant the catabolic process, by *Vyān* – व्यान – is meant the metabolic process. In the *Brahmachārī* all these processes are in balance.

तानि कल्पत् ब्रह्मचारी सलिलस्य पृष्ठे तपः अतप्यत् तप्यमानः
समुद्रे । सः स्नातः बभ्रुः पिंगलः पृथिव्यां बहु रोचते ।।२६।।

The *Brahmachārī*, having entered the ocean of knowledge – मुसद्रे – as if, swims on the surface of the current of water – सलिलस्य पृष्ठे – practising austerity – अतप्यत्. Having bathed in the ocean of knowledge (he comes out) – स्नातः, and shines on the earth with splendour – पिंगलः, and as the upholder of mankind – बभ्रुः.**26**.

EPILOGUE

The concept of *Brahmacharya* is a great discovery of the Vedic culture. It does not mean celibacy. It is much more than celibacy. It signifies physiological, psychological, and spiritual development of human beings. The word *Brahmacharya* is composed of two words – *Brahma* and *Charya*. *Brahma* means great, and *Charya* means movement. *Brahmacharya*, therefore, means a movement towards becoming great. The *Brahmachārī* is one who has planned his life as a movement towards greatness.

Phsiologically it means control over sex-life. Unbridled and uncontrolled sexual indulgence is a sure step towards the ruination of health. It is only the man who, flouting the biological law of sex, revels in sex-life. The nature does not sanction it. Semen – *Vīrya* (वीर्य) – which can create life, if absorbed in the body, can recreate energy and physical health. Whatever the moderns may say, sex-life does exhaust the man despite giving a temporary exhilaration. The finding of the Vedic culture is that sex-life, though a biological instinct, if channelled to higher purposes, releases unlimited energy which can be utilised for mental and spiritual development. To this end this *Sūkta* extols the life of *Brahmacharya*.

It does not, however, mean that sex-life is altogether prohibited by the *Vedās*. The eighth *Mantra* of this *Sūkta* says that through *Brahmacharya* an adult marries a grown-up girl – ब्रह्मचर्येण कन्या युवानं विन्दते पतिम्.

Besides the phsiological benefits, the psychological benefits are also immense. The *Brahmachārī* is a man of character. His main ambition in life is to acquire knowledge in every field, of every description, as the *Mantra* says. He has to go in search of every thing that is in the heaven and on the earth – इष्णन् चरति रोदसी उभे (see *Mantra* **1**). He leads a life of hardship and endurance (see *Mantra* **2**). The *Sūkta* is full of the word – *Tapas* – तपस् – which means life of hardship and endurance – तपसा पिपर्ति (see *Mantra* **22**). He has to sit at the feet of the *Āchārya*, live in his *Āshram*, and put forth all his efforts, avoiding a life of luxury, to the acquisition of knowledge.

As regards the spiritual benefits derived by the *Brahmachārī* through his contact with the *Āchārya*, the *Sūkta* says that his *Guru* imparts him the knowledge of *Brahma* – ब्रह्म – that is the divinity. The *Brahmachārī* is one who has developed himself physically, mentally, and spiritually. His achievement is not confined to one part of life. He lives a full life – of the body, of the mind, and of the soul.

While eulogising the principle of *Brahmacharya*, the *Sūkta* enunciates a dynamic principle of education. It says that the contact between the teacher and the taught should be as close as that between the mother and the child – कृणुते गर्भं अन्तः (see *Mantra* **3**). Much can be said to amplify this principle, but there is no doubt that a more appropriate expression could not be made on the subject.

The *Brahmachārī* is in tune with the nature. He is in tune with the non-living – plants and trees, with the living – birds, animals, and human beings – ते जाताः ब्रह्मचारिणः (see *Mantrās* **20** and **21**).

The *Brahmachārī* is unconquerable – अनभ्यारूढम् (see *Mantra* **23**); he leads a simple life, but still his face shines with splendour and brilliance – समिधा समिद्धः ; चरति रोचमानः (see *Mantrās*, **6**, **23**, **24** and **26**). Suffering hardship and endurance is his leading characteristic. Even the rulers must observe *Brahmacharya*, otherwise they cannot offer security and give protection to their subjects – ब्रह्मचर्येण तपसा राजा राष्ट्रं विरक्षति (see *Mantra* **17**). According to the Vedic ideology, undergoing hardship and leading a life of endurance are the essential virtues for a ruler who wants to govern successfully. In this *Sūkta*, in six stanzas the word *Brahmacharya* is used 24 times and the word *Tapas* – hardship and endurance – is used 10 times, showing the importance that is given to *Brahmacharya* –ब्रह्मचर्य – and *Tapas* – तपस् – a life of sexual purity, of simplicity, of hardship, and of endurance.

X

Samvanan Sūkta

संवनन सूक्त–वैदिक समाजवाद – १

Vedic Socialism - 1

This is the last *Sūkta* (191) of the *Rig Veda* – a unique prayer of Social Brotherhood in which the devotee invokes the Lord of Creation to inspire mankind with the feeling of love, and there is response from the Lord in the form of a Command that all of us should be bound together with a common Aim, common Thought, and common Will. The *Mantra* says:

सं समित् युवसे वृषन् अग्ने विश्वानि अर्यः आ।
इडः पदे समिध्यसे सः नः वसूनि आ भर ॥१॥

O showerer of blessings, bright and pure as fire, thou art Lord of Creation, thou verily bringest all creatures together, thou shinest on the face of the earth – इडः पदे – (due to thy splendour and greatness). Fill us with prosperity.**1**.

God is addressed here as *Vrishan* (वृषन्) – one who showers blessings on one and all. He is also addressed as *Agni* (अग्निः) – one who possesses the qualities of fire – gives spiritual light, reduces evil to dust, and has the dazzling light of one thousand suns. Further, He is addressed as *Aryah* (अर्यः) – one who is the Lord of Creation. Continuing, He is addressed as one who unites all creatures – विश्वानि सं युवसे, God is love. Love unites. It is the man who brings in hatred that divides. Such are the qualities of the Lord who shines on the face of the earth – इडः पदे – with splendour and brilliance. One who possesses such qualities, He alone can fill our empty selves with prosperity.

As His main attribute is to make men unite and to inspire them to live as a community of brotherhood, the following *Mantra* speaks of the way how to establish a common heritage:

सं गच्छध्वम् सं वदध्वम् सं वः मनांसि जानताम् ।
देवाः भागं यथा पूर्वे संजानानाः उपासते ।।२।।

You should move together, talk together, think together. Just as your elders of divine qualities with full knowledge and consciousness – संजानानाः – played their part – भागम् – in life (of moving together, thinking together, and talking together) so should you follow them in their footsteps. **2.**

समानः मन्त्रः, समितिः, समानी, समानं मनः, सह चित्तम् एषाम् ।
समानं मंत्रम् अभिमन्त्रये वः समानेन वः हविषा जुहोमि ।।३।।

Common be your Aim – मन्त्रः, common be the decision of your Assembly – समितिः, common be your Thought – मनः, common be your Will – चित्तम्. I direct you to common Aim, so that directed by common means – हविषा – you may achieve your object.**3.**

समानी वः आकूतिः, समाना हृदयानि वः ।
समानं अस्तु वः मनः, यथा वः सु सह असति ।।४।।

Common be your Intention – आकूतिः, common be the desire of your Heart – हृदयानि, common be your Thoughts – मनः – so that there may be the live-together-existence among you – सु सह असति.**4.**

XI

Sammanasya Sūkta

साम्मनस्य-सूक्त – वैदिक समाजवाद – २

Vedic Socialism - 2

The sentiments expressed in the *Rig Veda* have been echoed in the *Atharva Veda* in the 3.30 *Sūkta*. In this *Sūkta* emphasis is laid on mutual love in the family and on cooperative living in the society. The first *Mantra* of this *Sūkta* says:

सहृदयं सांमनस्यं अविद्वेषं कृणोमि वः ।
अन्यः अन्यं अभिहर्यत, वत्सं जातं इव अघ्न्या ।।१।।

I make you emotionally sympathetic to each other; intellectually of the same mind; each one of you should love each other, just as the cow loves her new-born.**1**.

Here the word *Aghnyā* – अघन्या – is used for cow. *Aghnyā* in Sanskrit means that which should not be killed. The use of this word for the cow is an irrefutable argument to prove that the cow was not killed in the Vedic times.

अनुव्रतः पितुः पुत्रो मात्रा भवतु संमनाः ।
जाया पत्ये मधुमतीं वाचं वदतु शान्तिवाम् ।।२।।

Let the son be to the pattern desired by the father; in tune with the mind of the mother. Let the wife speak in honeyed voice to the husband bringing peace (to the members of the family).**2**.

मा भ्राता भ्रातरं द्विक्षत् मा स्वसारं उत् स्वसा ।
सम्यञ्चः सव्रताः भूत्वा वाचं वदत भद्रया ।।३।।

Let not the brother hate his brother nor let the sister hate her sister. Let all live meeting together with a common object. Let them speak (with each other) in a language pregnant with noble sentiments.**3**.

येन देवाः न वियन्ति नो च विद्विषते मिथः ।
तत् कृण्मः ब्रह्म वः गृहे सज्ञानं पुरुषेभ्यः ।।४।।

I create – कृण्मः – that realisation – संज्ञानं – in the men of your household by which the people of divine virtue – देवाः – do not fall apart – वियन्ति – nor do they hate each other.**4**.

ज्यायस्वन्तः चित्तिनः मा वि यौष्ट संराधयन्तः सुमधुराः चरन्तः । अन्यः अन्यस्मै वल्गु वदन्तः एत सध्रीचीनान् वः संमनसः कृणोमि ।।५।।

Blessed by the elders, conscious of your place in life and of your duties, harnessing your energies for the successful achievement of your common objective – संराधयन्तः – living together, with sweet and sympathetic feeling – do not part from each other – मा वि यौष्ट. Speaking sweet and dear words, one with another, you come together – एत. I make you the ones who move together, go together – सध्रीचीनान्, and think together – संमनसः.**5**.

समानी प्रपा, सह वः अन्नभागः, समाने योक्त्रे सह वः युनज्मि ।
सम्यञ्चः अग्निं सपर्यत अराः नाभिं इव अभितः ।।६।।

Let the reservior of your drinking water – प्रपा – be common. Let you share your food in common. I unite you in a common bond (of love and brotherhood). Getting together – सम्यञ्चः – offer prayers to the divine light – अग्निं – just as the spokes (of the wheel) are joined together from all sides – अभितः – in the navel.**6**.

सध्रीचीनान् वः संमनसः कृणोमि, एकश्नुष्टीन् संवनेन सर्वान् ।
देवाः इव अमृतं रक्षमाणाः सायं प्रातः सौमनसः वः अस्तु ।।७।।

I make you all move together – सध्रीचीनान, think together – संमनस:. By coming together to partake of everything – संवनेन – I make you partake of food and every means of livelihood in common – एकश्नुष्टीन्. Like the men of divine qualities – देवा: इव, preserve the immortal virtues in life – अमृतं रक्षमाणा:, so that your mornings and evenings be peaceful and pleasant – सायं प्राय: सौमनस: व: अस्तु.7.

EPILOGUE

This and the previous *Sūkta* from the *Rig Veda* and the *Atharva Veda* respectively visualise domestic harmony and social equality. For the home it is said that the father, the mother, the brother, the sister – all should be knit together in a bondage of love and affection to each other. They should speak to each other as if their words were of honey – मधुमतीं वाचं वदतु. There should be no ill feeling between brother and brother and sister and sister. For the society it is said that each and every one of its members should be treated on a footing of equality. They should have a common kitchen, a common drinking place, a common aim in life. They should be emotionally one – सहृदयम्, psychologically one – सांमनस्यम्. Instead of looking to their individual interests they should look to each other's interests and advance socially as one unit. They should be so united as the spokes of the wheel are fixed in the navel of the cart. They should love each other just as the cow loves her new-born. The similes of the spoke of the wheel and the new-born of the cow are very apt illustrations of Vedic socialism. Just as the spokes fixed united in the navel of the wheel make it move, so should the different units of the society work unitedly to make the society work. And, just as the cow loves her new-born and keeps watch on it, so should men and women in the society love one another, and each one should look to the interests of others so that everyone's interests are safe.

XII

Shiva-Samkalpa Mantrah

शिव-संकल्प मन्त्राः

Purification of the Mind

The 34th chapter of the *Yajur Veda* comprises 58 *Mantrās*, of which the first six are incomparable in their description of the working of the mind. They point out that every thing in the world is the outcome of the mind. It is prayed in the *Mantrās* that this mind of one which travels far and wide, while one is awake and even while asleep, which is the light of the senses, from which originate all our actions, good or evil – may that mind be of noble resolves. In all the six *Mantrās*, the same idea is repeated to oneself as an auto-suggestion:

यत् जाग्रतः दूरम् उत् आ एति, दैवम्, तत् उ सुप्तस्य तथा एव एति । दूरम् गमम्, ज्योतिषां ज्योतिः एकम्, तत् मे मनः शिव-संकल्पं अस्तु ।।१।।

That mind of mine which is the light of lights – ज्योतिषाम् ज्योतिः, which in man's waking state as well as when he is asleep travels far and wide, may that mind of mine of divine qualities be of noble resolves.**1**.

Physically the man is restricted in his activities, but the mind is not restricted by physical limitations. The mind can see without eyes, hear without ears, walk without legs, fly without wings, travel far and wide without using limbs. That is its divine quality – दैवम्.

It is the light of lights – ज्योतिषां ज्योतिः. Our senses are instruments of knowledge, but if the mind is elsewhere, the eyes though open cannot see, the ears though working

cannot hear. The sense-organs work when the mind activates them, when the mind stops working the organs stop. Positively and negatively, it is not the senses that matter, it is the mind that is the force which makes the senses work. The senses are only instruments of the mind though, for all intents and purposes, one thinks the organs work independently.

When the mind is evil it can bring destruction, when it is noble it can bring peace in one's life as well as in the society. Being possessed of constructive and destructive forces it can do good as well as evil, hence one submits oneself to auto-suggestions every day, repeating to oneself: Let my mind be of noble resolves.

येन कर्माणि अपसः मनीषिणः यज्ञे कृण्वन्ति विदथेषु धीराः ।
यत् अपूर्वं यक्षम् अन्तः प्रजानाम्, तत् मे मनः शिवसंकल्पम् अस्तु ।।२।।

By which the men of steadfast character – धीराः, who are masters of their minds – मनीषिणः, in religious – यज्ञे, and mundane affairs – विदथेषु, perform ordinary actions – कर्माणि, and extra-ordinary actions – अपसः; the mind which is unique – अपूर्वं, and is worshipable – यक्षम्, existing within all of us – अन्तः प्रजानाम् – may that mind of mine be of noble resolves.**2**.

Here the word *Manīshinah* – मनीषिणः – is of great significance. *Manīshīh* – मनीषीः – means one who is the master of the mind. Though the mind seems to be the master of us all, there is some entity within us which is the master of our master. As the senses cannot move of their own, they are set in motion by the mind; similarly the mind also is not an independent entity – it is moved by some other power which is its master.

Secondly, the mind is an instrument. When one is awake to himself and realises that he is the master of his mind – मनीषी, then the mind follows the dictates of its master. By constant auto-suggestions a state of consciousness should come when instead of following the mind to whichever path it leads us, we should make the mind subservient to the soul which is the ultimate reality and to whose dictates the mind as the instrument should submit.

तत् प्रज्ञानं उत चेतः धृतिः च, यत् ज्योतिः अन्तः अमृतं प्रजासु ।
यस्मात् न ऋते किंचन कर्म क्रियते, तत् मे मनः शिवसंकल्पम्
अस्तु ॥३॥

That mind in which knowledge concentrates – प्रज्ञानम्, which is the consciousness itself – चेतः, which is the upholder or the foundation of all what man is – धृतिः, which is the immortal light – अन्तः ज्योतिः – within all created beings, without which no action is done, that mind of mine be of noble resolve.3.

Here four characteristics of the mind are mentioned: Knowledge – प्रज्ञानम्, Consciousness – चेतः, Foundation – धृतिः, and Inner Light – अतः ज्योतिः. The mind gives knowledge. In fact, the mind is nothing but knowledge. Then, it is consciousness. You cannot know unless you are conscious. Then again it is the foundation, the basis of both knowledge and consciousness. Both of them reside in the mind. Knowledge and consciousness cannot be the attributes of the body. The mind without knowledge and consciousness is no mind. The fourth attribute of the mind – Inner Light – enlightens the objects of the world outside. All this shows that due to these four attributes of the mind we are aware of the existence of the material world without which no action is possible. Therefore, the *Mantra* says that my mind without which no activity of the world is possible be of noble resolve so that I may be an instrument of noble deeds, not of evil deeds.

येन इदं भूतं भुवनं भविष्यत् परिगृहीतम् अमृतेन सर्वम् ।
येन यज्ञः तायते सप्तहोता, तत् मे मनः शिवसंकल्पम् अस्तु ॥४॥

By which immortal mind – अमृतेन – all this past, present, and future is held – भूतं, भुवनं, भविष्यत् परिगृहीतम्, as if in a grasp, by which is performed and extended – तायते – this *Yajña* – sacrifice – यज्ञः – of life, that mind of mine which performs this *Yajñya* with seven performers of sacrifice – सप्तहोता – be of noble resolve.4.

The mind moves into the past, in the present, and into

the future. One thinks of one's past events, roams all over the life one has lived, revels in reminiscences; dwells over the present events; and pictures out the future one wishes to make for oneself. Though living in the present, it recalls the past and visualises the future. Such an entity which is not bound by time must be a unique power. Hence, the *Mantra* calls the mind immortal – अमृतम् – that transcends time.

The second idea conveyed by the *Mantra* is that the life is a great *Yajñya* – a sacrificial performance undertaken by the instrumentality of the mind. The mind works through its seven helpers – सप्तहोता – two eyes, two ears, two nostrils, and one tongue. The helpers are set on a continuous performance of sacrifice – *Yajñya*. The eyes see, the ears hear, the nose smells, and the tongue speaks, and all of them pass on their acquired knowledge – the perception – the sound, the smell, the speech etc., respectively, to their master – the mind. This transmission is the sacrifice of the helpers, for sacrifice means surrender. The mind possesses an immortal power. Due to this power, it can use what it sees, hears, smells, and speaks – to the good or the evil of man. The prayer is that this mind of mine may be of noble resolve so that only good may come out of its workings.

यस्मिन् ऋचः साम यजूंषि यस्मिन् प्रतिष्ठिताः रथनाभौ इव अराः ।
यस्मिन् चित्तं ओतम् प्रजानां तत् मे मनः शिवसंकल्पम् अस्तु ।।५।।

In which the three branches of learning – *Richah* – ऋचः, *Sāma* – साम, and *Yajush* – यजुः (contained in the four *Vedas*) – are present as spokes in the navel of the chariot; in which is threaded – ओतम् – consciousness of all beings who are born, that mind of mine may be of noble resolve.**5**.

The mind is the repository of knowledge. As all the knowledge, according to the Vedic thought, is contained in the *Vedās*, so the mind is said here to be the repository of *Richah*, *Sāma*, and *Yajush* – ऋग्वेद, सामवेद, यजुर्वेद.

There is no doubt that all the knowledge comes out of the mind. Those pioneers of knowledge who made investi-

gations and discoveries and gave something new to the world did so out of their mind. One has to delve deep into the mind to reach the treasures of knowledge that lie hidden therein.

सुषारथिः अश्वान् इव यत् मनुष्यान् नेनीयते अभीशुभिः वाजिनः इव । हृत् प्रतिष्ठम् यत् अजिरं जविष्ठं, तत् मे मनः शिवसंकल्पम् अस्तु ॥६॥

That which drives – नेनीयते – men, as the good charioteer does the fast-running – वाजिनः – horses holding them by reins; Let that mind of mine, situated in the heart – हृत् प्रतिष्ठम्, immune from old age – अजिरम्, of immense speed जविष्ठम्, be of good resolve.**6**.

Here the body of the man is compared to the chariot and the mind to the charioteer. Just as the chariot is carried by horses on the roads, so is the body with its senses moving about in the different paths of life. The horses of the chariot are controlled by the charioteer holding the reins in his hands, the senses of the body move about in the different paths of life and are controlled by the resolution of the mind.

EPILOGUE

The *Mantrās* lay emphasis on the power of the mind. It is not the physical but the mental that is the reality. Physically speaking, man's powers are confined to the limitations imposed upon him by his body; mentally speaking, his powers are unlimited. Physically one may be in prison, but one's mind can transcend the prison-walls to travel all over the world free and unfettered. In fact, it is the mind that activates the body. The mind wanders about without feet and without wings while awake and even while asleep. One may not be able to accomplish a feat but in imagination one crosses over all the barriers. Whatever we do, it originates in the mind. Even wars, before they are fought on the battle-field, are enacted in the secluded chambers of the mind. Hence, realising the importance

of the mind, the Vedic *Mantrā*s exhort us to guide our minds in the right direction, for the mind always stands at the cross-roads, where there is a fork. The wrong choice of the road may lead one to darkness and death. The right choice may open out sunshine and brightness. Auto-suggestion is very helpful in giving direction and strengthening the mind. In all these six *Mantrā*s one is repeating to oneself: Let that mind of mine be of noble resolve. By repeatedly suggesting to oneself that one should be of noble mind, one will be of noble mind. It is advisable to repeat these *Mantrā*s before going into bed at night so that the suggestion may operate during sleep also.

XIII

Aghamarshaṇ Sūkta

अघमर्षण सूक्त

Smashing of Sin

The following three *Mantrās* are from the 10th *Mandal*, 190th *Sūkta* of the *Rig Veda*. They are a part and parcel of the daily prayer (*Sandhyā*) which every Hindu is expected to offer. They are called *Aghamarshaṇ Mantrās* (अघ मर्षण मन्त्र:), which means smashing of sin.

In the *Mantrās* the stupendous process of the origin and the working of the universe is described. How in the beginning of creation the universal, moral, and social laws were set in motion by the Infinite, Divine Power, how Time and Space came into existence, how the Cycle of year, month, day, and night started, and how all this is operating under the strict control, vigilance, and regulation – all this is emphasised in this *Sūkta* to instil in the mind of the recitor of the *Mantrās* that there is no laxity in the administration of justice in the realm of the Divine. One who realises the inevitability of the law of cause and effect abstains from evil deeds and does not fall a prey to sin. Agha (अघ) means sin, and *Marshaṇ* (मर्षण) means smashing. Hence, these *Mantrās* are styled as the *Aghamarshaṇ Mantrās*.

ऋतम् च सत्यम् च अभीद्धात् तपसः अधि अजायत ।
ततः रात्री अजायत ततः समुद्रः अर्णवः ।।१।।

When the Divine Forces worked themselves into an intense cognitional activity (*Tapas* – तपस्), from that activity were born the universal laws (*Ritam* – ऋतम्) and the moral and social laws (*Satyam* – सत्यम्). Then appeared utter

darkness – undifferentiated, homogeneous matter wherein nothing could be distinguished (*Rātri* – रात्रीः). And thence was born the ocean (*Samudra* – समुद्रः) – a Nebula which had the potentiality of further development.**1**.

The *Mantra* has six important words that call for explanation. They are *Ritam* (ऋतम्), *Satyam* (सत्यम्), *Tapah* (तपः), *Rātrih* (रात्रीः), *Samudrah* (समुद्रः), and *Arṇavah* (अर्णवः). It has been stated that the evolution of the world took place in this order. Let us now explain the meaning of the words.

Ritam (ऋतम्) is a rare word of the Vedic Sanskrit. The Latin word *Rectus* seems to have been derived from the Sanskrit word *Ritam*. *Rectus* means right. The significance of the Sanskrit word *Ritam* has been preserved in the meaning of the Latin word *Rectus*. The opposite of *Ritam* (ऋतम्) is *Anritam* (अनृतम्). *Anritam* in Sanskrit means wrong, false. *Ritam*, thus, in this context, means universal, unalterable, right laws which cannot be falsified. *Satyam* are moral and social laws. Universal laws are those to which there can be no exception, they are unalterable right laws. For instance, the physical, chemical, astronomical laws are unalterable; they are the same for all times and climes. The sun gives heat, the fire burns. They cannot do the reverse. The moral and social laws are verities which are to be interpreted according to time, place, and circumstance. The *Mantra* says that all these laws are the result of *Tapas* (penance – तपस) of the Divine Being.

What is *Tapas* (तपस्) of the Divine Being? *Tapas* means cognitional activity – तस्य ज्ञानमयं तपः – His activity-oriented knowledge is *Tapas* – penance. Generally our knowledge and action are divorced from each other. We know, but we do not act. The object of knowledge is that it should be translated into action. But there we fail. Knowledge that goes immediately into action is *Tapas* (penance – तपः). The knowledge of the Supreme Being is such that His Idea or Thought immediately materialises. There is no gap between His thought and His action. Hence, the *Mantra* says: From His *Tapas* were born *Ritam* – universal laws, and *Satyam* – moral and social laws. The significance of *Adhi Ajāyat* (अधि अजायत) is that whatever was thought

of or planned came into action at once. The Upanishad says: He saw, He wished, He brought forth – सः ऐक्षत, सः अकामयत, सः असृजत.

The next word to be considered is *Rātrīh* (रात्रीः). The *Mantra* says that after the universal, moral, and social laws were born, came the birth of *Rātrī* (रात्री). This word in plain Sanskrit means night. But here it cannot mean night as in the next *Mantra* there is a mention of day and night – अहोरात्राणि – meaning that day and night were born after *Samvatsar* (संवत्सर) – the year – was born. The day and the night being born after the year was born is right, but how could night be born after *Ritam* and *Satyam* were born?

Then, what is meant by *Rātrī* (रात्री – night) which was born after *Ritam* (ऋतम्) and *Satyam* (सत्यम्)? In this context *Rātrī* means utter darkness, a state in which nothing was distinguishable, the state of homogeneity of the matter. After all, creation is an evolution from homogeneity to heterogeneity, from potential to actual, from latent to patent. Undoubtedly *Rātrī* means night, it means darkness, it means the indistinguishable state of the matter, it means the potential or the latent state out of which the actual has to come, a seed in which are hidden the stem, the branches, the leaves, the buds, the flowers, the fruits. This is *Rātrī* – darkness – which has to be followed by light.

After *Rātrī* (रात्री) – night or darkness – was born *Samudra* (समुद्र). *Samudra* means ocean. How could the ocean be born out of night or darkness? Hence, here *Samudra* cannot mean ocean. To come to the right conclusion we have to see what the other texts say in such a reference where the matter of first creation is dealt with. In the *Purush Sūkta*, the first creation is called *Virāt* – ततः विराड् अजायत; in the *Hiraṇyagarbha Sūkta*, the first creation is called *Hiraṇyagarbha* – हिरण्यगर्भः समवर्तत अग्रे; in this *Sūkta* the first creation out of darkness is called *Samudra* – ततः समुद्रः. Hence, *Samudra* must mean *Virāt*, it must mean *Hiraṇyagarbha*. As both these words, according to our earlier discussion, mean Nebula, *Samudra*, in this context, must mean Nebula. The last word to be explained is *Arṇavah* (अर्णवः). *Arṇavah* means 'in activity'. Hence, the text means

that after darkness, that is, after indefiniteness, something definite in the form of Nebula took shape in which there was activity, potentiality, movement towards evolution.

What happened after the Divine Effort (*Tapas* – तपस्) caused the appearance of *Ritam* (ऋतम् – universal laws), *Satyam* (सत्यम् – moral and social laws), *Rātrih* (रात्री: – utter darkness bearing in itself all the seeds of the world to be born), and *Samudrah arṇavah* (समुद्र: अर्णव: – evolving the Nebular structure) is described in the next *Mantra*:

समुद्रात् अर्णवात् अधि संवत्सरः अजायत ।
अहोरात्राणि विदधत् विश्वस्य मिषतः वशी ।।२।।

From the evolving Nebula was afterwards produced the year. He the controller of the moving world after that created the days and the nights.**2**.

The activity of the world is possible by the assumption of two things – Space and Time. God created the Nebula which is an evolving seed of the world to appear in course of time. The nebula represents the *Space*. But the space is not enough for the world to go. There should be the *Time* during which the space is to be utilised. Hence the *Mantra* says that after the creation of the nebula which represents the Space, the year was born. *Samvastar* means year. *Samvatsar* (संवत्सर – year) in this context represents Time.

The order of the progression of creation presented in this *Sūkta* is as follows: Law and Order represented by the words *Ritam* and *Satyam*; Homogeneous condition of the matter represented by the word *Rātrī*; Space represented by the word *Samudra*; and Time represented by the word *Samvatsar*.

In the next *Mantra* it is said that this order of creation is eternal. It is a cyclic order. There is creation (सृष्टि) followed by dissolution (विसृष्टि – प्रलय), and again there is creation and dissolution. This cycle is continuous and eternal. The *Mantra* says:

सूर्याचन्द्रमसौ धाता यथापूर्वं अकल्पयत् ।
दिवं च पृथिवीं च अन्तरिक्षं अथो स्वः ।।३।।

Dhātā – the One Who upholds the stupendous universe. He created the sun and the moon during this period of creation, as He did it in the same manner, during the previous periods. He created the heaven, the earth, the firmament, and the sky.**3**.

The underlying idea of this *Mantra* is that the Creation (सृष्टि), Sustenance (स्थिति), and Dissolution (प्रलय) of the world is a matter of eternal cycle. This world is not the first and the last. There is an unending procession of creation, sustenance, and dissolution followed by a similar cycle without beginning, without end. This world is only a speck in eternity.

EPILOGUE

There are two points that require elucidation. The first one is: Why have we translated *Samudra* as Nebula whereas in Sanskrit it means ocean. The second point is: Why this *Sūkta* is styled *Aghamarshaṇ Sūkta*?

(1) *Samudra means Nebula* – In common parlance *Samudra* means ocean, but we have rendered it as Nebula. Why? Because in the other *Mantrā*s describing the evolutionary process of creation the first thing created is called *Virāt* or *Hiraṇyagarbha* or *Mahat* which we have translated as Nebula. This we have done basing our judgement on the etymological meaning of the words which can be interpreted as Nebula only. *Virāt*, *Hiraṇyagarbha*, and *Mahat* have been said to be the first creation; here also the *Samudra* has been shown as having come into existence from darkness, which means that it is the first creation, for prior to it everything was darkness. Etymologically also *Samudra* means a substance to which or from which everything flows – सं अभिद्रवन्ति यस्मिन् यस्मात् वा. As the created world evolves or flows from the nebula, it can rightly be called *Samudra*. Moreover, due to the similarity in the vastness of space occupied by the ocean with the immensity of space occupied by the nebula, the latter may be addressed as *Samudra* or ocean of space.

(2) *Why this Sūkta has been called Aghamarshaṇ* (*smashing of sin*) – All the *Mantrā*s of the *Sūkta* point out to

one thing – that is, this vast universe, though created with tremendous force and mighty intelligence of the Divine Being with minutest planning, is ultimately destined to dissolution; there is nothing permanent. When the fate of this enormous world is dissolution and destruction, what is the position of an individual who cannot be compared even with a speck in this boundless space? Nothing lasts, everything vanishes. If so, why to be attached with things we have necessarily to part with, and why to sin for their acquisition by means fair or foul? When the sense of evanescence of the material objects dawns upon one, the urge to sin is automatically smashed. Hence, these *Mantrā*s are called *Aghamarshaṇ Mantrā*s – sin-smashing *Mantrā*s.

XIV

Man Āvartan Sūkta

मन आवर्तन सूक्त

Calling Back the Mind to the Centre

This is the 58th *Sūkta* of the *Rig Veda*. The theme of the *Sūkta* is that it is the nature of the mind to wander all over the world. It does not stay at one point. For a meaningful life it is essential that the mind develop the faculty of concentration. The *Sūkta* goes on repeating that your mind which runs about hither and thither has to be brought back to one point so that you concentrate on the problems of life and solve them rather than fritter away its vital force. The *Sūkta* is of 12 stanzas (*Mantrās*) in each of which is repeated that I bring back the mind under control and restrain it from wanderings.

यत् ते यमं वैवस्वतं मनः जगाम दूरकम् ।
तत् ते आ वर्तयामसि, इह क्षयाय जीवसे ।।१।।

That mind of yours which has gone far away to *Yama* – यम – Death – the son of *Vivaswān*, I bring it back – आ वर्तयामसि – for it to stay – क्षयाय – here so that you may live – जीवसे.**1**.

The *Mantra* is addressed to one who is so much depressed in mind that he is thinking of committing suicide. His mind is so much unhinged that he yearns to meet *Yama* – Death. To such a one it is said: Let not the mind run away with the depressing emotions; Call it back; Life is not to be thrown away like that. The ordinance from God – the Almighty – is: Come back and live, and live in this body. It is often found that due to physical or mental strain or

illness a person gets so much dejected that he thinks of nothing but getting rid of his troubles by committing suicide. If at that critical moment he is saved, then life opens out new avenues to him and his precious life is not wasted. The *Mantra* is a clarion call on how to save those whose mind is failing them and to inspire them to come back to the struggles of life.

यत् ते दिवं, यत् पृथिवीं, मनः जगाम दूरकम् ।
तत् ते आ वर्तयामसि, इह क्षयाय जीवसे ॥२॥

That mind of yours which has gone far away to the heaven and to the earth, I bring it back, for it to stay here, so that you may live.**2**.

A wandering mind to the heaven and to the earth means an impractical mind. Instead of thinking of issues on hand, it flies in imagination and builds castles in the air. To such a mind the *Mantra* says: Come to the world of flesh and blood and do things practical so that the life may be worth living. Either a man may be so much sick of life that he thinks of running away from it, or so much fascinated with life that he lives in imagination. Such people are far away from the stern realities of life and are advised by these *Mantrās* to view it not as a fiction but as a matter of factual existence.

यत् ते भूमिं चतुर्भृष्टिं मनः जगाम दूरकम् ।
तत् ते आ वर्तयामसि, इह क्षयाय जीवसे ॥३॥

That mind of yours which has gone far away to the earth decaying on all four sides, I bring it back, for it to stay here, so that you may live.**3**.

That the mind going away to the earth decaying on all four sides is a significant expression. How is the earth decaying on all four sides? This expression points to the materialistic life pervading every nook and corner of the earth. There are many lanes and bye-lanes for the mind to wander about; two have already been noted; the third is rank

materialism. The mind has lost itself in the material pleasures of life. Indulgence in material pleasures leads to decay. Hence, the *Mantra* says that if your mind strays away to the material life which spells disaster both for the body and for the mind, then I will bring it back to you so that you may live the real life and be saved from decay which is the inevitable destiny of those who stick to the pleasures of flesh.

यत् ते चतस्रः प्रदिशः मनः जगाम दूरकम् ।
तत् ते आ वर्तयामसि, इह क्षयाय जीवसे ॥४॥

That mind of yours which has gone far away to all the four quarters of the earth, I bring it back, for it to stay here, so that you may live.4.

In the previous *Mantra* mind's reach is limited to one's nearabouts, in this *Mantra* the range visualised is unlimited – all the directions of the earth are the area for the mind to wander about. If the mind strays away in any direction it has to be brought back and stayed for concentration on issues that matter for life.

यत् ते समुद्रं अर्णवं मनः जगाम दूरकम् ।
तत् ते आ वर्तयामसि इह क्षयाय जीवसे ॥५॥

That mind of yours which has gone far away to the watery ocean, I bring it back, for it to stay here, so that you may live.5.

The *Mantra* takes the wanderings of the mind as far as the ocean. The mind may go anywhere in its unsettled state. Its salvation lies in settling down for concentration. Then only does it help one to reach the destination of life.

यत् ते मरीचीः प्रवतः मनः जगाम दूरकम् ।
तत् ते आ वर्तयामसि इह क्षयाय जीवसे ॥६॥

That mind of yours which has gone far away to the fast-moving rays of light, I bring it back, for it to stay here, so

that you may live.**6**.

What is meant by the fast-moving – प्रवत: – rays of light – मरीची: The rays of light move at the speed of 186,000 miles per second. The speed of the mind is greater than that of the rays of light. The mind has to be brought under control so that life may have its goal achieved; unless it is brought back to the centre of its objective, it leads the man nowhere; like a truant child it will always be on the run and never at the task.

यत् ते अप:, यत् औषधी:, मन: जगाम दूरकम् ।
तत् ते आ वर्तयामसि इह क्षयाय जीवसे ।।७।।

That mind of yours which has gone far away to the waters, to the medicinal plants, I bring it back, for it to stay here, so that you may live.**7**.

यत् ते सूर्यं, यत् उषसं, मन: जगाम दूरकम् ।
तत् ते आ वर्तयामसि इह क्षयाय जीवसे ।।८।।

That mind of yours which has gone far away to the sun, to the dawn, I bring it back, for it to stay here, so that you may live.**8**.

यत् ते पर्वतान् बृहत: मन: जगाम दूरकम् ।
तत् ते आ वर्तयामसि इह क्षयाय जीवसे ।।९।।

That mind of yours which has gone far away to the great mountains, I bring it back, for it to stay here, so that you may live.**9**.

यत् ते विश्वं इदम् जगत्, मन: जगाम दूरकम् ।
तत् ते आ वर्तयामसि इह क्षयाय जीवसे ।।१०।।

That mind of yours which has gone far away to the world, I bring it back, for it to stay here, so that you may live.**10**.

'Gone far away to the world' means to the objects of the world. The mind wanders in sense-objects in imagination. It is the nature of the mind to wander and not to stay at one point. Staying at one point means concentration. Problems are solved by concentration; but as it is difficult to concentrate with a wandering mind, man's life is beset with problems. Where does the mind wander? It wanders anywhere and everywhere, some examples of which are given above.

यत् ते पराः परावतः मनः जगाम दूरकम् ।
तत् ते आ वर्तयामसि इह क्षयाय जीवसे ।।११।।

That mind of yours which has gone far, far away, farthest to the farthest – पराः परावतः, I bring it back, for it to stay here, so that you may live.**11**.

यत् ते भूतं च भव्यं च मनः जगाम दूरकम् ।
तत् ते आ वर्तयामसि इह क्षयाय जीवसे ।।१२।।

That mind of yours which has gone far away to the past and to the future, I bring it back, for it to stay here, so that you may live.**12**.

EPILOGUE

All the problems of man are the problems of mind. In fact, most of the physical illnesses can be traced to an unhealthy mind. If the mind is under control of the soul, all the problems are solved. This *Sūkta* lays emphasis on controlling the mind. The difficulty with the mind is that it continues to stay away and does not stay for long at one point. It defies concentration. There are several directions in which it wanders. It goes in all directions and at such a speed that even the speed of the rays of light is slow in comparison. It flies far away, farthest than the farthest. While being in the present, in a moment it goes back to the past, and in no time it flies to the future. After all, the mind is the ser-

vant of the soul. The soul should sway over the mind, and not the other way. The *Mantra* says that, unfortunately, it is the mind that dominates the soul. The process should be reversed. To that end it is repeatedly said in the 12 *Mantrās*: I bring the mind back to its master – the soul from whose grip it is struggling to release itself. Only when the mind is brought back to its moorings can one solve the problems of life. Repeating these *Mantrās* as auto-suggestions educates the mind in concentration.

The text says: I bring the mind back here – *Kshayāya Jeevase* – क्षयाय जीवसे – so that you may live. The words can also be interpreted as: I bring the mind back from its vagabondage for extinction so that you may live. The word *Kshaya* – क्षय – means extinction. The mind's running about has to be extinguished so that one may live. It is a very significant and pragmatic expression implying that one must die so that one may live – die for the present, live for the future. Unless one dies to the ignominious past, one cannot expect a brilliant future. *Kshayāya Jeevase* – क्षयाय जीवसे – means: O mind, Die to thy fickleness to enjoy the immortality of the soul.

XV

Shraddhā Sūkta

श्रद्धा सूक्त

Devotion, Dedication, and Faith

All religions lay emphasis on the efficacy of faith. Faith means reliance on the Divine Power and surrendering to it in all earnestness. One may rely on one's own efforts or surrender to the dispensation of the Supreme Being who alone guides the destiny of individuals, societies, and the world at large. Where effort fails, faith prevails. Incurable diseases which defy remedial measures disappear under faith-cure. One may not be able to reason out the why of it, but faith works wonders where all other means prove futile.

Faith in Sanskrit is called *Shraddhā*. The 151st *Sūkta* of the *Rig Veda* deals with *Shraddhā* – श्रद्धा – Faith.

श्रद्धया अग्निः समिध्यते, श्रद्धया हूयते हविः ।
श्रद्धां भगस्य मूर्धनि वचसा वेदयामसि ।।१।।

Agni – अग्निः – Fire is enkindled by *Shraddhā* – Faith; By *Shraddhā* is the *Havi* – हविः – oblation offered; I declare – वेदयामसि – with my speech – वचसा, that Faith is at the head of Success (*Bhag* – भग, भाग्य) in life.**1**.

The *Mantra* says: *Agni* – Fire – is enkindled by Faith. How is fire enkindled by faith? To understand this we must appreciate that in this context *Agni* does not mean the physical fire. The word *Agni* is symbolic of the fire of enthusiasm that burns in the heart of a man of faith prompting him to dedicate his life to a noble cause. Next, the *Mantra* says: By faith is oblation offered. Offering of

oblation is also symbolic of the sacrifice one makes for one's religion, or country, or ideal. Lastly, the *Mantra* says that faith is at the head of success or achievement in life. There is no denying the fact that even the hardest situations are met with faith within and God overhead.

प्रियं श्रद्धे ददतः, प्रियं श्रद्धे दिदासतः ।
प्रियं भोजेषु यज्वसु, इदं मे उदितं कृधि ॥२॥

O Goddess of Faith, do good to him who gives – ददतः; Do good to him who even wishes to give – दिदासतः; Do good to him who enjoys the world – भोजेषु – with a feeling that his enjoyment is a sort of *Yajñya* – यज्वसु; Please grant what I have said – उदितं (or work for my rise or uplift – उदितं).**2**.

The Vedic conception is that the instinct of possession and hoarding is at the root of all economic ills of the society. The *Upanishad* says: तिस्रः गतयः वित्तस्य – Money has three destinations – दानम्, भोगः, क्षयः – Either it is given to the needy (*Dānam* – दानम्), or it is enjoyed (*Bhogah* – भोगः), or it goes waste (*Kshayah* – क्षयः). Giving to the needy is the best use of money, enjoyment comes next. If neither given nor enjoyed, then of what use is it? Very few people give, but those who give do so out of faith – *Shraddhā* – in higher values of life. The *Mantra* addressing the *Shraddhā* invokes Goddess requesting her that all may be blessed: The giver, the one who intends to give, as well as the one who at least enjoys with a sense of non-attachment and does not let the wealth of the country go waste.

यथा देवाः असुरेषु श्रद्धां उग्रेषु चक्रिरे ।
एवं भोजेषु यज्वसु अस्माकं उदितं कृधि ॥३॥

All the men of noble qualities – *Devāh* – देवाः – have faith in the worst of men; So in spite of our enjoying the world we do so treating it as a *Yajñya*. Please work for our rise, our uplift.**3**.

The idea conveyed in this *Mantra* is that if you have

faith in the goodness of man, you will find nobility even in the worst of mankind. Enjoy the pleasant things of the world, but while enjoying them treat life as a *Yajñya* – यज्ञ. It means that our enjoying the world is with a feeling of non-attachment. In this way, O Lord, inspire us to work for our betterment.

श्रद्धां देवाः यजमानाः वायुगोपाः उपासते ।
श्रद्धां हृदय्यया आकूत्या श्रद्धया विन्दते वसु ॥४॥

The devotees – यजमानाः, of Divine qualities – *Devāh* – देवाः, performing *Prānāyām* – वायुगोपाः, worship the Lord with *Shraddhā*. With an intense feeling of *Shraddhā* in the heart one achieves prosperity by means of *Shraddhā* – Faith.**4**.

One who has intense faith in one's heart does *Prānāyām* and worships God with genuine faith and is blessed by God and is never in want. His rise and betterment are assured.

श्रद्धां प्रातः हवामहे, श्रद्धां मध्यन्दिनं परि ।
श्रद्धां सूर्यस्य निम्रुचि, श्रद्धे श्रद्धापय इह नः ॥५॥

We invoke *Shraddhā* in the morning, at mid-day, we invoke *Shraddhā* at the setting of the sun. O *Shraddhā*, inspire us with faith in thee.**5**.

EPILOGUE

Shraddhā is derived from the word *Shrat* – श्रत्, which means Truth – सत्य. Truth is the basic element of life. It is on the Truth that the whole of our social structure rests. *Shraddhā* does not mean blind faith. *Shraddhā* means an implicit faith in the ultimate triumph of the Truth in personal and social affairs of men and societies. It may take time, but the human experience is that in the long run the Truth and nothing but the Truth prevails. To have faith in such a thing is *Shraddhā*. Besides this meaning of

Shraddhā, the other meaning of the word is to have faith in the Supreme Power that presides over the universe. What am I in this vast universe? It is the will of the Supreme Power that counts. That Power which regulates the movement of the tiniest and the biggest – the Will of that Power prevails. Man in his impudence vaunts to be the arbiter of his destiny, but there are moments when he finds himself crest-fallen. Then he realises that it is not he, but some other power before whom one has to surrender. That is Faith, that is *Shraddhā*.

This *Sūkta* invokes *Shraddhā* – morning, noon, evening, and night – to be the guide of one's life so that one may leave oneself in the hands of the Power Supreme with Faith in the kindness of the Lord.

There is another word which needs explanation. We have translated the word *Vāyugopah* (वायुगोपा:) as those who perform *Prānāyām* (प्राणायाम). Why so? *Vāyu* (वायु) means air or breath we breathe in or *Prān* – प्राण. *Gopah* (गोपा:) comes from the root 'गुपु रक्षणे'. *Gopa* (गोप) means to protect. Thus *Vāyugopah* (वायुगोपा:) means those who protect the breath of life – which means *Prānāyām* (प्राणायाम). *Vāyugopah* (वायुगोपा:) are those who preserve their life by means of controlling their life energy inherent in the air we breathe. This science is called *Prānāyām* – प्राणायाम.

XVI

Madhu Sūkta

मधु सूक्त

Honeyed Life

The *Atharva Veda* (*Kanda* 1, *Sūkta* 36), has five *Mantrās* which inspire the devotee to mould life in such a manner that it may emit sweetness of honey all around. Our words should be sweet, our behaviour should be sweet, everything going from us to others should be sweet, sweeter, sweetest. This sweetness is compared to the sweetness of the sugarcane which grows in sweetness and is taken out from the ground with sweetness.

इयं वीरुत् मधुजाता मधुना त्वा खनामसि ।
मधो ! अधिप्रजाता असि, सा नः मधुमत् कृधि ॥१॥

This plant of honeyed sweetness has grown out of a sweet root (that is, out of the heart). I dig it out with sweet (hands). As thou art born out of sweetness, so make all of us full of sweetness.**1**.

The poet imagines the heart to be the soil of honey. Out of it grows a plant or a creeper containing honey, that is Life, which the poet digs out and exclaims: Thou art born out of honey, make us sweet as thyself. One's heart should be full of sweetness, as sweet as honey.

जिव्हया अग्रे मधु मे, जिव्हामूले मधूलकम् ।
मम इत् अहः क्रतौ असः, मम चित्तं उपायसि ॥२॥

There be honey at the tip of my tongue; abundance of

honey at the root of my tongue; honey at my behaviour, come and stay, O honey, in my heart.**2**.

One should speak sweet words to everybody, one's behaviour with people should be sweet. This sweetness should not be a feigned affair, it should be a part of one's nature – चित्तं उपायसि.

मधुमत् मे निष्क्रमणं मधुमत् मे परायणम् ।
वाचा वदामि मधुमद् भूयासं मधुसंदृशः ॥३॥

My coming should be sweet, my going should be sweet, my voice should be sweet, my appearance should be sweet.**3**.

मधोः अस्मि मधुतरः मधुघात् मधुमत्तरः ।
मां इत् किल त्वं वनः शाखां मधुमतीं इव ॥४॥

Being sweet as honey I may be sweeter than honey; from being sweeter I may be sweeter than the sweeter. O Sweetness, come unto me – वनः – as the branch of a sweet plant.**4**.

परि त्वा परितन्तुना इक्षुणा आगाम् अविद्विषे ।
यथा मां कामिनी असः यथा मत् न अपगा असः ॥५॥

Let me not entertain ill-will against anybody – अविद्विषे – I solicit thee, O Honey, as one goes to a branching-off, widespread – परितत्नुना – sugarcane. O Honey, long for me. Do not depart from me.**5**.

XVII

Mrītyu Sukta

मृत्यु सूक्त

Drive Away, O Death

The 18th *Sūkta* of the 10th *Mandal* of the *Rig Veda* is addressed to Death. Death is personified as a deity with eyes to see and ears to hear. The *Sūkta* addresses the death as a person and asks him to get out of the way and let one enjoy long life of frolick, dance, and laughter. Thus commences the address to death:

परं मृत्यो अनु परेहि पन्थां, यः ते स्व इतरः देवयानात् । चक्षुष्मते शृण्वते ते ब्रवीमि, मा नः प्रजां रीरिषः मा उत वीरान् ।।१।।

O Death! Depart to a distant path; go to the path that is thy own – यः ते स्वः : go to the path which is other than the path of the *Devās* – इतरः देवयानात्. I speak unto thee: look with thine eyes and hear with thine ears. Do not harm our offsprings nor do harm our menfolk.**1**.

The *Mantra* addressing the death advises him to go to the path which is not of the *Devās* – that is, men of divine qualities. This means that men of divine qualities, men of virtue, are not afraid of death; it is only the wicked, the criminals, who are in constant fear of death.

Other than the path of *Devās* – *Devayān* – देवयान – may also mean the path of *Pitriyān* – पितृयाण – that is, which is not the path of the *Devās*, which is the path of the ordinary men. In this context the *Mantra* may mean that the fear of death may assail the ordinary men, but those who are of higher or divine qualities shall have no fear of death, and hence for them there is no existence of

death. Death is death because of the fear attendant with it.

मृत्योः पदं योपयन्तः यत् ऐत द्राघीयः आयुः प्रतरं दधानाः ।
आप्यायमानाः प्रजया धनेन शुद्धाः पूताः भवत यज्ञियासः ॥२॥

If after crossing over the path of death you reach – ऐत, longer, larger – द्राघीयः, and better – प्रतरः – life, then endowed – आप्यायमानाः, with progeny and prosperity, cleansed and pure, you attain the status of those who perform the *Yajñya* – यज्ञियासः.**2**.

What is the status of those who perform the *Yajñya*? Their life is that of sacrifice, self-abnegation, and surrender. One who gets over the fear of death and attains long and better life, as prayed for in this *Mantra*, it becomes his duty to live a life of sacrifice and selflessness.

इमे जीवाः वि मृतैः आ आववृत्रन् अभूत् भद्रा देवहूतिः नः अद्य ।
प्राञ्चः अगाम नृतते हसाय, द्राघीयः आयुः प्रतरं दधानाः ॥३॥

Today our call for the Divine (देव हूतिः) has been worth while – अभूत् भद्राः, for the reason that these persons (of Divine qualities) have separated themselves from those who have been called dead. May we, the living ones, move forward, dancing, laughing, and possessing long and better life.**3**.

The *Mantra* extols the life of the living who move, dance, and laugh, live long and live better. Death has to be overcome and life has to be lived in all its fullness. Such an active and exuberant life has to be lived for one hundred years. For the next *Mantra* says:

इमं जीवेभ्यः परिधिं दधामि, मा एषाम् नु गात् अपरः, अर्थ एतत् ।
शतं जीवन्तु शरदः पुरुचीः, अन्तः मृत्युं दधतां पर्वतेन ॥४॥

I mark out this limit for the living persons; none should intervene in this limit; this should be accepted as a settled fact – अर्थ एतत्. May they live one hundred years – शतं

जीवन्तु, progressing and moving forward – पुरूची:. If death intervenes (in this period of one hundred years), then ward it off by means of your mountainous strength.**4**.

Unlike the Biblical conception of the span of human life being three score years and ten, the Vedic conception of the span of human life is one hundred years – शतं जीवन्तु. Not only that, this *Mantra* says that if you find death intervening during this period to cut the life short, then fight it out with the strength of a mountain of Will to Live in this struggle between Life and Death so that Death may not cross over your Will to Live.

To ward off death, the following *Mantra* gives illustrations how life should be followed by another life. There should be continuous healthy life, not even illness may be allowed to intervene:

यथा अहानि अनुपूर्वं भवन्ति, यथा ऋतवः ऋतुभिः यन्ति साधु ।
यथा न पूर्वं अपरः जहाति, एवा धातः आयूंषि कल्पय एषाम् ।।५।।

Just as days follow days; just as seasons follow seasons in order; just as the successor does not abandon his predecessor; so, O Upholder of the Universe, organise the lives of these men.**5**.

The idea conveyed in this *Mantra* is that life should be so led that there be no room for fear of death. Day follows day, season follows season. So should life follow life. This is the prayer besought of God. It does not mean that death can be banished from the scheme of life. It only means that life, so long as we are living, should be lived in all its fullness. One should think of prolongation of life, rather than dwell upon death which will come when it should come. Everyday's life should be followed by life – no illness, no depression, nothing that obstructs the smooth flow of life. Even regarding old age it says:

आ रोहत आयुः जरसं वृणाना अनुपूर्वं यतमाना यति ष्ठ ।
इह त्वष्टा सुजनिमा सजोषा दीर्घं आयुः करति जीवसे वः ।।६।।

Oh Men! embark on life, even while accepting the

oncoming old age – जरसम्, striving – यतमाना: – as before; stay where you are – यति ष्ठ. Here – इह, the Creator – त्वष्टा, who has given you good life – सुजनिमा, with zest – सजोषा, may grant you long life – दीर्घं आयु:.**6**.

Here old age is accepted as an inevitable fact of life, but one is asked to remain as active – यतमाना: – as one was before old age came upon him. Not only active, there should be the same zest in life as one had in youth. One should accept chronological old age, but at the same time should continue to work with the same enthusiasm as one had when he was young.

A distinction is made in this *Mantra* between the dead and the living. The persons of Divine qualities are called the living ones; others, the dead ones. The Divine people stand apart from the Undivine. It is for the Divine that long and better life is accorded; the Undivine are as good as dead. The same principle applies to women with regard to whom the next *Mantra* says:

इमाः नारीः अविधवाः सुपत्नीः आंजनेन सर्पिषा सं विशन्तु ।
अनश्रवः अनमीवाः सुरत्नाः आरोहन्तु जनयः योनिं अग्रे ।।७।।

Let the women, who are not widows – अविधवा:, who are good wives – सुपत्नी:, anointed with unguent and butter, with no tears in their eyes – अनश्रवा:, without any disease – अनमीवा:, decorated with precious jewels – सुरत्ना:, capable of giving birth to children – जनय:, come – आरोहन्तु, and be the first to enter the house – योनिं अग्रे संविशन्तु.7.

For men who get over the fear of death, the *Mantra* says, they should wish for long and better life, a pleasant life of dance and laughter; for women with similar conception of death, it is said that they should anoint themselves with unguent and butter, decorate themselves with jewels, should be free from sorrow and disease. The *Mantra* says that such an experience is life, the lack of such an experience is death.

To another woman who loses her husband and is weeping and wailing, the *Mantra* advises endurance of the inevitable and facing the reality as it is:

उदीर्ष्व नारी अभि जीवलोकं, गतासुं एतं उपशेष एहि ।
हस्तग्राभस्य दिधिषोः तव इदम् पत्युः जनित्वं अभि संबभूथ ॥८॥

Rise, Oh Woman ! Come unto the world of the living. Why dost thou sleepest near the one who is lifeless. Of thy husband who took thy hand (in marriage) – हस्त ग्राभस्य – and offered to support thee – दिधिषोः – his, this much only was the genial – जनित्वं – association with thee.**8**.

The woman faces two important situations in life – one that of a married life if the husband is alive, the other that of widowhood, if the husband is dead. In the 7th *Mantra* the former situation is dealt with. The married woman should anoint herself with unguent and butter, dance and laugh and play; the widow, on the other hand, though disposed to pessimism, should not weep and wail for the lost husband. She should feel that the period she and her husband lived together was the only period they were destined to live in each other's company. Having realised this, she should rise and prepare herself for the world of the living for active life.

Similarly, with regard to the dead man of the family, his successor is asked in the following *Mantra* not to weep and wail but to take up the challenge of life and follow the path of the predecessor leading to victory:

धनुः हस्तात् आददानः मृतस्य अस्मे क्षत्राय वर्चसे बलाय ।
अत्र एव त्वम् इह, वयं सुवीराः विश्वाः स्पृधः अभिमातीः जयेम ॥९॥

Taking the bow from the hand of the dead man, to maintain our vigour, energy, and strength, we say to the dead: You be here (lie here dead), we along with our heroic children win victory over our arrogant – अभिमातीः – enemies.**2**.

The *Mantra* says that nothing comes to an end after death. The woman with her husband alive adorns herself, looks after her health, and lives a full life of a woman; with her husband dead she should not weep and wail, but take the event as a stern and solid fact and face life boldly. The man should aspire to live a long life, marching ahead, dancing and laughing. He should plan to live one hundred

years. When the elders die, the successors should carry on the fight to advance the cause of their predecessors to maintain the vigour, energy, and strength of the family. There is no room for pessimism anywhere, no shadow of death mars the zest for life of the man and the woman of the Vedic culture.

The successor of the dead is advised hereunder to extend his scope of activity to every nook and corner of the earth, for the earth is his protector and will enrich him with gifts if he puts forth his labour to deserve those riches:

उप सर्प मातरं भूमिम् एताम् उरु व्यचसं पृथिवीम् सुशेवाम् ।
ऊर्णमृदा युवतिः दक्षिणावते एषा त्वा पातु निर्ऋतेः उपस्थात् ।।१०।।

This *Mantra* is addressed to the successor of the dead. It says : Proceed – उप सर्प, to this Mother-Earth which is spread far and wide – उरु व्यचसम्, and is delightful – सुशेवाम्. Let this earth, like a virgin – युवतिः, soft as wool – ऊर्ण मृदा, protect you from the proximity – उपस्थात्, of troubles – निर्ऋतेः. You who deserves unsought help – दक्षिणा – or who is well-versed in his profession.**10**.

Some scholars read in this the idea of entering the dead body into the earth. But that does not fit in with the general tenor of the *Sūkta*. The idea running through the *Mantra* is that of daring and adventure. In the previous *Mantra* it is said that we should overcome our enemies. Our translation is more in keeping with the strain pervading the whole of the *Sūkta*. The same tone continues in the *Mantra* that follows :

उत् स्वञ्चस्व पृथिवी, मा नि बाधथाः, सूपायना अस्मै भव,
सूपवञ्चना । माता पुत्रं यथा सिचा अभि एवं भूमे ऊर्णुहि ।।११।।

Oh Earth! rise up – move towards – सु अञ्च गतौ (स्वञ्चस्व) – (the young adventurer) by equipping him with the means of (success) – सु उपायना, and be comfortable – सु उपवञ्चना. As the mother covers her child (for protection), so, Oh Earth! envelop – ऊर्णुहि, this child of yours (with

blessings so that he may feel himself protected by you).**11**.

The idea conveyed in this *Mantra* is that it is not only the man who has to put forth his effort to ward off death, it is the circumstances also that make one's life a success and enable one to enjoy a situation in which one finds oneself placed. What circumstances? This is mentioned in the next *Mantra*:

उच्छ्वञ्चमाना पृथिवी सु तिष्ठतु, सहस्रं मित उप हि श्रयन्ताम् । ते गृहासः घृतच्युतः भवन्तु, विश्वा अहाः अस्मै शरणाः सन्तु अत्र ।।१२।।

May the earth, while heaving up – उच्छ्वञ्चमाना – be steady; May thousands upon thousands (of people) find shelter in it; May your houses exude *Ghee*; May every day here be a shelter for him (who is in search of a shelter).**12**.

उत् ते स्तभ्नामि पृथिवीं, त्वत् परि इमं लोगं निदधत्, मा अहम् रिषम् । एतां स्थूणां पितरः धारयन्तु ते, अत्रा यमः सदना ते मिनोतु ।।१३।।

I make the earth steady for thee, providing for thee this place (for residence); लोगं; I may not injure (any one); Let the elders, पितरः, hold for thee this place for permanent residence – स्थूणा, Let the Ordainer of the universe – यमः – measure out – मिनोतु, this place for residence – सदना for you.**13**.

For safety and security, which are essential for life and deterrent to death, shelter on the earth is necessary. Besides shelter, food is to be provided. This *Sūkta* mentions about houses – गृहासः, and food represented by *Ghee* which is the essential substance of nourishment as provided by the Ordainer of life – यम.

H.H. Wilson translates this stanza as under:

I heap up the earth around thee, placing (upon thee) this clod of earth; may I not be injured; may the *Pitri*s sustain this thy monument; may *Yama* make thee a dwelling here.

Our translation refers to the living person who has to

overcome death, for whom a place of residence has to be provided. Wilson's translation refers to the dead person whose body has to be consigned to the tomb.

Both meanings are plausible, but as the tenor of the *Sūkta* is to overcome and drive death away – परं मृत्यो: अनुपरेहि – and live a comfortable life of dance and laughter – अगाम नृतये हासाय – for men and women and to wish for a long life – द्राघीय: आयु: प्रतर:, our meaning is more to the point. Wilson's translation can be accepted if we accept the theory of entombment of the dead as an injunction of the *Vedā*s, which it is not.

प्रतीचीने म्राम् अहनि इष्व: पर्ण इवा दधु: ।
प्रतीचीं जग्रभा वाचं अश्वं रशनया यथा ।।१४।।

When my days are adverse – प्रतीचीनं, (they strike me) as the arrow strikes the leaf. I restrain – जग्रभा, my retaliatory adverse tongue – प्रतीचीं; just as the horse if briddled by the rein.**14**.

EPILOGUE

Death is the deity – देवता – of the first four *Mantrā*s, but as the whole *Sūkta* of fourteen *Mantrā*s deals with death, we have styled it *Mrityu Sūkta* – मृत्यु सूक्त.

But though it is styled *Mrityu Sūkta* – Chapter on Death – it is actually the Chapter on Life. In the very beginning the *Mantra* says: Oh Death! "depart to a distant path". In this *Sūkta* one calls the death face to face and exhorts him, as if he had eyes to see and ears to hear, to let people live in peace and harmony. The main theme is of longevity – द्राघीय: आयु: – long life, and not of death. There is a divine call – देव हूति: – to human beings to laugh, sing and dance, and lengthen the days of life warding off the dark shadows of death. Even women are exhorted to take part in the festivities of life. Let the dead bury their dead – is the burden of the song of every stanza. Even the widow is advised not to bewail the loss too long and to accept the death of her husband as a solid fact of life – अर्थ एतत्.

The depressing emotions of death are to be met by the mountain of optimism and life is continued as days follow days and seasons follow seasons. Optimism has been raised to such a pitch that while ending the *Sūkta* the *Mantra* says that an injured person even though he were struck to the quick as the leaf is pierced through by the arrow should not retaliate even by the use of his tongue and should restrain himself as the horse is restrained by holding up his reins.

XVIII

Miscellaneous Mantras

प्रकीर्ण मन्त्राः

We have given some *Sūktās* (chapters) from the *Vedās* to give a glimpse of the contents of the sacred books which the Hindus regard as the fountainheads of their religion and culture. As the number of *Mantrās* of the *Vedās* are too many, it is not possible to take the reader through all the *Vedās*. The *Rig Veda* alone contains 10,600 *Mantrās* (stanzas), besides the *Mantrās* of the other three *Vedās* – *Yajur Veda*, *Atharva Veda*, and *Sāma Veda*.

In this book we have made two kinds of selection due to the vastness of the field we are treading. In the foregoing pages we have dealt with the complete *Sūkta* – chapter – from the given *Veda*. In the pages that follow we have made a random selection of the *Mantrās* – stanzas – that throw light on specific topics and will enlighten the reader on the ideas contained in the *Vedās* and help him evaluate the process of evolution of human thought.

(A) MONOTHEISM

The western scholars who have written on the *Vedās* are of the opinion that the *Vedas* contain polytheism as they think that in the evolution of human thought monotheism is a later development. But let us see what the *Rig Veda*, which is admittedly the oldest book in the library of mankind and about which Max Müller and MacDonell say: "We must rest content with moderate estimate of 13th century B.C. as the appropriate date for the beginning of Rigvedic period", has to say about it. The *Rig Veda* (1, 184, 46) says:

इन्द्रं मित्रं वरुणं अग्निं आहुः अथो दिव्यः सः सुपर्णः गरुत्मान् ।
एकं सत् विप्राः बहुधा वदन्ति अग्निं यमं मातरिश्वानम् आहुः ।।

He is One, the wise call Him by many names – they call Him *Indra*, *Mitra*, *Varuna*, *Agni*, *Yama*, *Matarishva*. He is called *Suparṇa*, *Garutmān*.

It is very strange that despite this clear declaration by the *Veda* itself, the western scholars are so much prejudiced that they are not prepared that in 1300 B.C. there could be any religion which could think of monotheism. For them the mystery becomes all the more deeper when they are told by another western scholar of the *Vedās*, Prof. Jacobi, that the date of the *Vedās* goes as far back as 4500 B.C.

(B) OMNISCIENCE OF GOD

यः तिष्ठति चरति, यः च वञ्चति, यः निलयं चरति, यः प्रतंकम् ।
द्वौ सन्निषद्य यत् मन्त्रयेते, राजा तद् वेद वरुणः तृतीयः ।।

One who stands, one who moves, one who cheats, one who works against from outside, one who works against from inside, where two sitting together conspire, KNOW YE, that HE – the *VARUN* – is the THIRD there who knows what transpires. (*Atharva Veda*, 4-16-2).

(C) OMNIPRESENCE OF GOD

उत् यः द्यां अतिसर्पात्, न सः मुच्यातै वरुणस्य राज्यः ।
दिवः स्पशः प्रचरन्ति इदम् अस्य सहस्राक्षः अति पश्यति भूमिम् ।।

Even if one flies beyond the sky, one is not free from the clutches of the realm of *Varuna*. His spies move about everywhere. Thousand-eyed, they scan beyond the earth. (*Artharva Veda*, 4-16-4). *Varun* here means God.

अन्ति सन्तं न जहाति, अन्ति सन्तं न पश्यति ।
देवस्य पश्य काव्यम्, न ममार न जीर्यति ।।

He is so near that one cannot leave Him, and because He is so near it is not possible to see Him. Look at this poetic expression of God in the visible world. O man, this visible poem of God neither dies nor ages. (*Atharva Veda*, 10-8-32).

In these two *Mantrās* God's Omnipresence is expressed by saying that you cannot see Him because He is so near. You see a thing because it is at a distance. When there is no distance between God and you, how can you see Him? But if you cannot see Him it does not mean that He does not exist. He so much exists that you cannot be without Him. This poetic existence of God is eternal. It will never grow old nor will it ever die. For every poet of all ages and times God in the poetry of the world will ever remain young.

(D) THE PHYSICAL WORLD IS HIS ANTHROPOMORPHIC MANIFESTATION

The wide world with the earth, the space above and whatever is beyond is conceived as the body of the Divine Existence in *Atharva Veda* as depicted in the following *Mantrās*:

यस्य भूमिः प्रमा, अन्तरिक्षम् उत उदरम् ।
दिवं यः चक्रे मूर्धानम्, तस्मै ज्येष्ठाय ब्रह्मणे नमः ।।

Whose the earth is like His feet, the space is like His abdomen, and the heaven above is like His head: To such a Great One we pay our homage. (*Atharva Veda*, 10-7-32).

यस्य सूर्यः चक्षुः, चन्द्रमा पुनर्णवः ।
अग्नि यः चक्रे आस्यम्, तस्मै ज्येष्ठाय ब्रह्मणे नमः ।।

Whose the sun and the ever-new moon are the eyes, fire is the mouth: To such a Great One we pay our homage. (*Atharva Veda* 10-7-33).

यस्य वातः प्राणापानौ चक्षुः अंगिरसः अभवन् ।
दिशः यः चक्रे प्रज्ञानीः तस्मै ज्येष्ठाय ब्रह्मणे नमः ।।

Whose wind is the in-going and out-going breath, the rays are the eyes, the directions are the knowledge: To such a Great One we pay our homage. (*Atharva Veda*, 10-7-34).

These three *Mantrās* of the *Atharva Veda* clearly point out that God is not residing somewhere above the earth as is believed by some important religions of the world, but this gigantic universe itself is His manifestation.

(E) NO ANTHROPOMORPHIC CONCEPTION REGARDING GOD

On the basis of evolutionary theory it is said that the primitive conception of God is anthropomorphic. God was conceived in the form of a huge man. The study of the *Vedās* shows that it is not so at least in these scriptures as is clear from the above three *Mantrās*. The evolutionary conception of anthropomorphism is that the primitive idea of Godhead is a huge person with exaggerated qualities of man, residing like man in some unknown place. If the *Vedās* are the oldest books, and they go back in date to at least 14 B.C. according to MacDonell, then let us see what the *Yajur Veda* has to say about God:

सः परि अगात्, शुक्रम्, अकायम्, अव्रणम्, अस्नाविरम्, शुद्धम्, अपापविद्धम्, कविः, मनीषी, परिभूः, स्वयंभूः याथातथ्यतः अर्थान् व्यदधात् शाश्वतीभ्यः समाभ्यः ।।

He is pervasive everywhere. He shines. He is bodyless – अकायम्. He can have no wounds (as He has no body). He has no muscles, no sinews, no nerves – अस्नाविरम्. He is pure. He is untouched by sin. He is All-Knowing – कविः. He witnesses every thing – मनीषी. He is present everywhere परिभूः. He is causeless cause, self-existent – स्वयंभूः. He created – व्यदधात् – for creatures without end – शाश्वतीभ्यः समाभ्यः – things of the world – अर्थान्, as they should be – याथातथ्यतः. (*Yajur Veda*, 40-8).

One can very well understand that this description of God given in the *Yajur Veda* cannot fit in with an anthropomorphic description in any way.

(F) CONCEPTION OF THE STATE AND THE SOCIETY

What is the conception of the State and, consequently, of the Society, according to the *Veda*? The following *Mantra* from the *Yajur Veda* depicts the Vedic State and Society in glowing words:

आ ब्रह्मन् ब्राह्मणः ब्रह्मवर्चसी जायताम् । आ राष्ट्रे राजन्यः शूरः इषव्यः अतिव्याधी महारथः जायताम् । दोग्ध्री धेनुः वोढा अनड्वान्, आशु सप्तिः, पुरंधिः योषा, जिष्णुः रथेष्ठाः, सभेयः युवा, अस्य यजमानस्य वीरः पुत्रः जायताम् । निकामे निकामे नः पर्जन्यः वर्षतु । फलवत्यः नः ओषधयः पच्यन्ताम् । योगक्षेमः नः कल्पताम् ॥

O God, Let the learned people of our State – ब्राह्मणाः, be brilliant in intellect and lustrous in face – ब्रह्मवर्चस्वी, with faith in God – ब्रह्म. Let the soldiers – राजन्याः, of our State – *Rāshtra* – राष्ट्र, be courageous – शूराः, wielders of weapons – इषव्याः, undoing the criminals – अतिव्याधी, and great warriors – महारथाः. Let the kine of the tillers of the soil yield abundant milk, let their bulls be strong bearing heavy weights, let their horses be capable of running at full speed. Let the women assure the safety of the city – पुरन्धिः. Let the chariot-warriors be victorious. Let the young – युवा – be sociable and cultured enough to move in the Society – सभेयः. Let the son of the devotee be valorous – वीरः. Let the cloud shower rain on the earth, here, there, and everywhere. Let the plants and vegetables grow with their ripe fruit. Let there be welfare – योगक्षेमः – of all of us. (*Yajur Veda*, 22-22).

This description of the State in which *Brahmaṇ*s, *Kshatriyā*s, and *Vaishyā*s are in their best, corresponds with Plato's description of the State who has classified the Society into Philosophers, Soldiers, and Artisans.

The adjective *Purandhi* – पुरंधिः – used for women in the *Mantra* is significant. To call women as saviours of the city speaks highly of the civilisation and the culture enshrined in the *Veda*. *Manu* – the Indian law-giver, says : यत्र नार्यस्तु

पूज्यन्ते रमन्ते तत्र देवता – Where women are respected there live men of divine qualities. One can judge the level of civilisation of the Society by seeing the status assigned to women. Women set the standard of civilisation of the Society.

(G) POSITION OF WOMEN

The following three *Mantrās* from the *Atharva Veda* speak about the status of woman in the Vedic conception:

यथा सिन्धुः नदीनां साम्राज्यं सुषुवे वृषा ।
एवा त्वं साम्राज्ञी एधि, पत्युः अस्तं परेत्य ।।

As the rivers create a powerful empire in the form of ocean after merging in it, likewise, you, O woman, after settling down in the house of your husband will create an empire of which you will be the empress. (*Atharva Veda*, 14-1-43).

साम्राज्ञी एधि श्वशुरेषु, साम्राज्ञी उत देवृषु ।
ननान्दुः साम्राज्ञी एधि, साम्राज्ञी उत श्वश्रवाः ।।

In the empire of your household you will be the empress for your father-in-law, empress for your brothers-in-law, empress for your sisters-in-law, empress for your mother-in-law. (*Atharva Veda*, 14-1-44).

गृभ्णामि ते सौभगाय हस्तं, मया पत्या जरदष्टिः यथा असः ।
भगः अर्यमा सविता पुरन्धिः मह्यं त्वा अदुः गार्हपत्याय देवाः ।।

While holding the hand of the bride, the bridegroom says: I hold thy hand for enhancing fortune for both of us. Live with me as thy husband till our old age. All the elders of our Society, fortunate people – भगः, good and noble people – अर्यमा, men of creative intelligence – सविता, women who guard the administration of the city – पुरन्धिः – have blessed us to live together as husband and wife – गार्हपत्याय. (*Atharva Veda*, 14-1-50).

(H) SOCIAL LIFE

Ours is the age of Socialism and Equality. Let us see what is the Vedic conception of social life.

अज्येष्ठासः अकनिष्ठासः एते सं भ्रातरः वावृधुः सौभगाय ।
युवा पिता स्वपा रुद्रः एषाम् सुदुघा पृश्निः सुदिना मरुद्भ्यः ।।

None is big, none small, all are equal as brothers, and all together move on for prosperity. The common father is eternally young – युवा पिता. He is self-maintained – *Svapā* – स्वपा. He does not depend on anybody. He is Powerful – *Rudrah* – रुद्र: The common Mother is *Prishni* (*Prakriti*) – Matter – which is prolific in abundant production – *Sudughā* – सुदुघा – for men – मरुद्भ्यः. (*Rig Veda*, 5-6-5).

ते अज्येष्ठाः अकनिष्ठाः उद्भिदः अमध्यमासः महसा वि वावृधुः ।
सुजातासः जनुषा पृश्निमातरः दिवः मर्त्याः आ नः अच्छा जिगातन ।।

They are neither big nor small, nor have they grown to be in the middle, but they all with courage scale upward. All equally well born – सुजातासः, with earth as their mother – पृश्निमातरः, all divine mortals may come to us very well. (*Rig Veda*, 5-59-6).

The *Mantra* makes two significant statements: The first statement is that though one is neither big, nor small, nor midway, still the effort of all is to go upwards. The second statement is that this upward movement is towards the divine, the movement of the mortals towards the immortal.

In the following *Mantra* the conception of equality of all human beings is brought to its logical conclusion by stating that none has the right to feed himself without seeing that none goes without food. The *Mantra* says:

मोघं अन्नं विन्दते अप्रचेता सत्यं ब्रवीमि बध इत् स तस्य ।
न अर्यमणं पुष्यति न सखायं, केवलाघः भवति केवलादी ।।

I tell the truth – सत्यं ब्रवीमि, he is practically sense-

less – अप्रचेताः, who stores wealth. This storage is almost his murder – वध इत् स तस्य. By such a storage neither noble people are helped nor one's friends. One who eats alone – केवलादः, without sharing with others, he eats nothing but sin alone – केवलादी. (*Rig Veda*, 10-117-6).

(I) GENERAL EXHORTATIONS

अक्षैः मा दीव्यः, कृषिं इत् कृषस्व, वित्ते रमस्व बहुमन्यमानः ।
तत्र गावः, कितव, तत्र जाया, तत् मे विचष्टे सविता अयं अर्यः ।।

Don't play with dice, don't gamble. Ply the fields, depend upon your own labour. Whatever you earn thereby be satisfied treating it as enough. Herein you possess animals for use – cows, bulls, horses; herein you have the satisfaction of having the family. This has been advised to me – विचष्टे – by the distinguished Lord of Creation – सविता अर्यः. (*Rig Veda*, 10-34-13).

परः अप इहि, मनस्पाप, किम् अशस्तानि शंससि ।
परः इहि, न त्वा कामये, वनानि संचर । गृहेषु गोषु च मे मनः ।।

Get away, O sin of the mind; Why dost thou recommend to me undesirable things; Get away; I do not want thee; Away to the woods. My mind is set on my family and the wherewithals. (*Atharva Veda*, 6-45-1).

In the original the *Mantra* says: My mind is set on my house and the kine. For the word 'kine' we have used the word 'wherewithal' for that is the intention conveyed. The idea is that one should not indulge in speculation and sinful acts but should earn by labour and look to the upkeep of one's household and live a contented life.

उत् यानं ते पुरुष न अवयानं, जीवातुं ते दक्षतातिं कृणोमि ।
आ हि रोहेम अमृतं सुखं रथं, अथ जिर्विः विदथं आ वदासि ।।

O man, let there be rise for thee, not a fall. I make thy life full of dexterous strength. I proclaim this truth – विदथम् – unto thee; Let us ride over this immortal chariot

of the body with pleasure. This is praiseworthy – अथ जिर्विः. (*Atharva Veda*, 8-1-6).

उत देवाः अवहितं देवाः उत् नयथा पुनः ।
उत आगः चक्रुषं देवाः देवाः जीवयथा पुनः ।।

O Lord, of divine attributes, help those who have fallen – अवहितम् – to rise again – उत् नयथा पुनः. Let those who have sinned and feel they are lost to a noble life, be alive again. (*Atharva Veda*, 4-13-1).

आयुषा आयुः कृताम् जीव, आयुष्मान् जीव, मा मृथाः ।
प्राणेन आत्मन्वतां जीव, मा मृत्योः उत् गाः वशम् ।।

O man, live the life of those who plan it out – Live long, do not think of death. Live like those who are alive to the existence of Self; don't be a victim of death. (*Atharva Veda*, 19-27-8).

अभयं नः करति अन्तरिक्षं, अभयं द्यावापृथिवी उभे इमे ।
अभयं पश्चात् अभयं पुरस्तात्, उत्तरात्, अधरात् अभयं नः अस्तु ।।

May we be fearless from mid-region, from the heaven and the earth, from both. May we not have fear from front, behind, and below. (*Atharva Veda*, 19-15-5).

अभयं मित्रात्, अभयं अमित्रात्, अभयं ज्ञातात्, अभयं परोक्षात् ।
अभयं नक्तम् अभयं दिवा नः, सर्वाः आशाः मम मित्रं भवन्तु ।।

May we not be afraid of our friends and of foes, of the known and of the unknown. May we be fearless at night and fearless during the day. May all directions be friendly towards us. (*Atharva Veda*, 19-15-6).

भद्रं कर्णेभिः शृणुयाम देवाः, भद्रं पश्येम अक्षिभिः यजत्राः ।
स्थिरैः अंगैः तु तुवांसः तनूभिः वि अशेमहि देवहितं यत् आयुः ।।

O ye adorable one, may we hear with our ears what is auspicious; May we see with our eyes what is auspicious; May we with our limbs and body strong, singing, enjoy the life worthy of men of noble qualities. (*Yajur Veda*, 25-21).

(J) OH, YE CHILDREN OF THE IMMORTAL

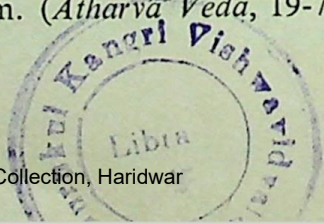
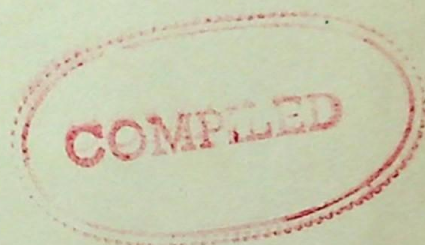
युजे वां ब्रह्म पूर्व्यम् नमोभिः वि श्लोकः एतु पथ्या इव सूरेः ।
श्रृण्वन्तु विश्वे अमृतस्य पुत्राः, आ ये धामानि दिव्यानि तस्थुः ।।

I join you both – युजे वां – mind and speech – which are the foremost sources of knowledge – ब्रह्म पूर्व्यम्. With salutations come our praises (for the combination of mind and speech, which means that we may speak whatever there is in the mind, not the reverse) – नमोभिः विश्लोकः एतु. Just as the soldier carries with him his ration – पथ्या – (for sustenance), similarly we should treat our speech to sustain what we have in mind. Hark ye, men, Oh children of the immortal – अमृतस्य पुत्राः – thus you will stay – तस्थुः – in the Divine Realms – धामानि दिव्यानि. (*Rig Veda*, 10-13-1).

The *Mantra* lays stress on the necessity of mind and speech being in unison. The advice is addressed to all mankind – children of the Immortal Divine for thus alone we shall have our stay in the Realm Divine. The words – Hark ye, children of the divine – श्रृण्वन्तु विश्वे अमृतस्य पुत्राः – are very significant and go to the heart of the devotee.

(K) EPILOGUE

स्तुता मया वरदा वेदमाता प्र चोदयन्तां पवमानी द्विजानाम् । आयुः प्राणं प्रजा पशुं कीर्ति द्रविणं ब्रह्मवर्चसम् मह्यं दत्वा व्रजत ब्रह्मलोकम् ।।

I have paid homage to the blessed Mother – *Veda* – who encourages the learned in their higher activities of life, granting me long life, breathing power, progeny, cattle, name and fame, wealth and spiritual splendour, and then go to the Divine Realm. (*Atharva Veda*, 19-71-1).

Whether the Vedic hymns were composed in 1000 or 1500 or 2000 or 3000 years B.C. no power on earth could ever fix. However the fact remains that the *Vedas* are admittedly the oldest books in the library of mankind and go far back in time of history when mankind had not set its pace on progress and civilisation.

In this book the Author has given some *Suktas* (chapters) from the *Vedas* to give a glimpse of the contents of the sacred books which the Hindus regard as the fountain-heads of their religion. However the mode of presentations of *Vedas* in Sanskrit, particularly in Vedic Sanskrit, is very much different from the presentation in Modern Languages. Moreover Languages and modes of expression undergo vissitudes when they travel the course of millions of years. Hence Prof. Satyavrata Siddhantalankar instead of giving word for word translation of the *Vedas* explains the core of the verse in simple, lucid language. The *Suktas* presented in this book throw light on specific topics and will enlighten the reader on the ideas contained in the *Vedas* and help him evaluate the process of evolution of human thought.

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